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ARTICLES DE PARIS



ARTICLES DE PARIS

A BOOK OF ESSAYS

BY
SISLEY HUDDLESTON

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1928

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Set up and printed.
Published October, 1928.

SET UP BY BROWN BROTHERS LINOTYPERS
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
BY THE STRATFORD PRESS

PR
6015
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A8
1928

NOTE

Some of these sketches have appeared in *The Times*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Illustrated London News*, *John o' London's Weekly* and the *Observer*, and to these publications I desire to express my best thanks.

DEDICATORY AND PREFATORY

MY DEAR RICHARD LE GALLIENNE,

Like me, have you not, in your wanderings about the city we both love, had moments of weariness, when the noble churches no longer pleased, when the magnificent urban perspectives of modern thoroughfares palled, when even the picturesque streets of the Marais lost their charm—though but for a moment; and have you not then, like myself, paused before a little insignificant *baraque* on the Boulevard, and turned over its glittering stores, and asked the price of one trivial article and purchased another trinket? Have you not, in certain moods, amused yourself with these frivolities? The wise may give them hard names, may call them paltry and pitiful, trashy and gimcrack. What does it matter? Let us imagine how this twopenny-halfpenny necklace will adorn the breast of a pleasant prattling Parisian work-girl, how she will delight in these flimsy ear-pendants, what joy she will have of this trumpery ring—a ring which will contain for her more dreams than the rich Sultanas of the rue de la Paix can find in their

Aladdin's palace of jewels and of dresses. Tinsel is the only ware, Shakespeare might have said. Some young man will proudly put this tie-pin in his bosom, and sally forth on Sunday in high adventurous spirit, a Don Quixote of the Boulevard, ready to succor damsels in distress. With a newfangled contrivance to keep his coat in shape, he will be equipped to go in quest of your own Golden Girl. There is, for me, a real romance in these gilded, gaudy, gingerbread ornaments. They are finery and frippery touched with pathos. We will not disdain the gewgaws, for they too are tokens of human desires and human vanities—that is to say, of human poetry. These *articles de Paris* are foolish enough, but they are, in this, like all other toys with which mankind bedecks and beguiles itself; and it is not because they do not correspond to our own superior taste that we will regard them superciliously. They have their importance for lads and lasses who do not, measured aright, differ materially from us. All the world in the last resort loves the fiddle-faddle, the fingle-fangle, the farcical and finical. All the world is happy with catchpenny things. Besides, there is, on this stall, good solid utilitarian stuff. There are braces and sock-suspenders, belts and footgear, and washable collars. There are ingenious household implements by which potatoes may be peeled in a trice and boots

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blackened to shine like mirrors, and lampshades and electric torches. There are pipes and tobacco-pouches with names written in gold. There are, for the children, bears that will dance and boxers that will fight; there are tops that will spin and dolls that will cry. There are truly ingenious inventions for every age and every station. And each of these thousands of things costs but a tiny coin. I am never tired of contemplating them; and when the flesh is sad and all the books are read and all the sights are seen, one can still imagine the diversified ends for which these *articles de Paris* are intended, and follow them in thought to their human destination. The French excel in these slight contraptions, and we, I trust, have some *flair* in discerning the comedies—aye, and the tragedies—that lurk in them. . . . My own little collection of essays I have, greatly daring, called *Articles de Paris*. I hope it is not impertinent to suggest that on this stall is an assortment of frivolities over which you will care to linger, which you will occasionally finger, and in which at odd moments you will find entertainment.

SISLEY HUDDLESTON

PARIS

June 1928

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ARTICLES DE PARIS

ARTICLES DE PARIS

A CHANSON OF BÉRANGER

RARELY have I seen such a beautiful head. The brow was unwrinkled alabaster; the features of a remarkable regularity. The face was framed in shining silver hair; curling like the water of a sunlit stream. It fell undulatingly from the forehead to the shoulders, while the beard lay in ripples on the breast. But chiefly was I struck with the expression of complete placidity in the deep blue eyes and a pleasant smile that played in the corners of the lips.

Had I met him in a drawing-room it would have been startling. Certainly I should have assumed him to be highly distinguished; have put him down as a poet who had lived with beauty all his life and upon whom beauty had cast her peaceful mantle. 'The good grey poet' we used to say when speaking of Walt Whitman, but in Whitman there was fire and storm, while in him of whom I write there was an equal serenity. The years had increased his contentment until now

it would be hard to imagine any event that could ruffle the sweetness of his countenance. The outward calm reflected an inward content.

But it was not in a drawing-room that I encountered him. He had not passed his existence in tranquil surroundings. Neither the balm of nature nor the consolation of art had, I imagine, been his lot. Of his history I know nothing, but I met him in such conditions as made it certain that he had endured poverty and was an outcast in the crowded streets of the great city.

He was picking up cast-away cigarette ends on the terrace of a Paris café.

Paris is a noisy, glaring, animated place, but in it are oases of quietude. These oases are not found only in the graceful gardens where children play and students talk and citizens greet each other under the trees by the white statues. The quietest corners are often the terraces of cafés in the early morning sunshine. I sat alone at my little table of the Closerie des Lilas—the Lilac Close—looking out on the open space with tall trees and the wonderful statue of Maréchal Ney by Rude. Beyond was the bustle of the Boul' Mich'. The resounding shuttle of the unceasing traffic came to me softened by sufficient distance. That is why Paris is so appealing—in the very heart of the perpetual rumour of human activities are these silent spaces.

When I first became aware of him he was bent double, scrutinizing the ground for his meagre gleanings. I wondered dimly what he could do with this slender, unconsidered harvest and how it could nourish him.

Then he looked up and I saw with a start of sudden emotion the beautiful face framed in shining white. It was exactly the same emotion as one may experience in coming upon a field of flowers or upon the sparkling sea revealed at an acute bend of the ascending road. Beauty is in its essence one, whether it be the beauty of a spire, a picture, a landscape, or a face. An unwonted joy bubbled in my heart.

I smiled and there was an answering smile on the visage of the poor collector of discarded trifles as he bent anew to his task. What had he been? What could he have been? I could only think he had been a male model in the studios of Montparnasse. Surely that was his profession, and surely the changed taste of the public and the strange endeavours of the modern artists, enamoured of ugliness and disdainful of beauty, had deprived him of his occupation, and had driven him into his present pursuits.

As he passed me I impulsively stretched out my hand and placed in his hand a small French note. Never have I seen such an expression of amazement as filled his eyes. He was no beggar. He

had never expected alms. It seemed incredible to him that anybody should offer him money. But after a moment's hesitation he took the note, aware that it was tendered with no desire to humiliate, aware that it was a spontaneous gift of equal to equal. To have refused it would have been a haughty gesture of which he was incapable. His acceptance was true kindness. His was the kindness, not mine. Then indeed did he smile! His face was irradiated. He bowed with a kindly nobility that will be for ever a happy memory. On his way he went without a word, and I sat savouring the incident which I foolishly thought had ended.

A quarter of an hour later I was still sitting on the terrace rejoicing, in the brightness of the morning and in the unfathomable depths of human sympathy. I had not forgotten him, but his physical presence had passed out of my existence.

There was a football. I turned, and there was the beautiful face again transfigured by a smile. The eyes smiled and the lips smiled and the whole presence of the man was a smile. His white, slender hand was extended and on the table before me I saw a folded piece of paper. Once more he bowed with inexpressible nobility and went his way.

I unfolded the paper which was soiled and

crumpled. Upon it was written in pencil a poem. It was a poem of Béranger, the beloved poet of the French people. I will not transcribe it here, but its purport was that it is sinful to despair, that clouds will always break, pierced by the sun, that God's goodness is infinite and unfailing. Its optimism was, if you will, commonplace and platitudinous, but it is precisely because such optimism is commonplace and platitudinous that it is marvellous. As poetry it was as poor as its philosophy is popular—a mere jingle of rhythms and rhymes, a facile series of hackneyed phrases. But what matter? It would have been worse had it been better. It was perfect as it was. It had touched his heart and given him courage and calm and it touched my heart and gave me courage and calm. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall see God! Here is simplicity of incomparably greater worth than the sophistication of clever folk.

As I reconstruct the charming episode, he had gone away with a renewed conviction of the infinite and unfailing goodness of which I was to him the humble instrument, and he had resolved that he must repay me and convey to me his thanks. He could not take a gift without some return. But his means were limited. They consisted of a dirty piece of paper, a stump of pencil, and a recollection of a cheering song. Some-

where out of sight he had carefully written, in a bold firm handwriting, the chanson of Béranger, and when he had completed it he brought to me, as man to man, his little precious gift. There could be no question of obligation one to the other, for each had given what he had to give, but his gift was of higher quality than mine.

A story with many morals, yet there is one which I should like especially to draw. We are told sometimes that the French are cynical, are flippant, are vainglorious, are immoral, are atheistical. But with some knowledge of the world I declare that the gracious feeling, the spiritualized expressiveness, the absolute rightness, of this gesture of the poor collector on the café terrace, are, I will not say peculiarly French, but are more likely to manifest themselves in Paris than in any other city in the world.

THE MOTHER OF GOD

ROBESPIERRE, the man with a cat's face, at the moment when his power seemed supreme, when he might well have indulged in his dream of wading through blood to a higher place than had ever been held by monarch under the *ancien régime*, was thrown down from his pedestal because there happened to live in Paris an obscure old woman with a little crowd of foolish followers who called her the Mother of God. It is the most curious story of all the strange years of the French Revolution when mysticism took the weirdest forms.¹

In the by-ways of history one learns to understand the times. In these by-ways we see the ordinary man and woman walking. We ascertain how they felt about the gigantic events taking place around them, and we obtain a glimpse of their motives, their reactions, and their rôle, which is sometimes more important than the rôle of the conspicuous personages. Thus I am inclined to think that the family Duplay, with

¹ See *Robespierre et la Mère de Dieu* by G. Lenôtre. (Perrin, Paris.)

whom Robespierre lodged, the old religious visionary Catherine Théot, with her devotees, the astute Vadier, who quietly worked to Robespierre's undoing, the two picturesque police officers, Héron and Sénar, and even the disreputable monk Dom Gerle, are as worthy of our attention as many of the more prominent figures of the Revolution. Lenôtre has painted a striking picture of Duplay, the elderly carpenter, patriarchal, proud, severe, honest, ruling his little flock of four daughters, who had been well brought up by the religious sisters of the Conception, and now assisted their mother, careful housewife, in her domestic duties. It would seem that such a family might safely thread its way through the terrors of the troubled years. But one evening—it was 17 July 1791—there was a stormy meeting at the Club of the Jacobins. Maximilien Robespierre wished to avoid the street manifestations which would inevitably follow. He did not know Duplay; but when the carpenter, moved by a sudden impulse, invited him to take refuge in his house, he accepted. He found the apartment, modest as it was, so convenient that he gave up his former lodgings, and remained, sharing the meals of the family.

One can imagine the perturbation in the little establishment where nothing abnormal had hitherto happened. The young girls were discreetly

curious about the celebrated and rather mysterious stranger. The mother was gratified by the astonishment of the neighbours. The old carpenter experienced an extraordinary satisfaction, and thereafter himself frequented the Jacobins. The tiny house in the rue Saint-Honoré soon became a rendezvous of the friends of Robespierre. Within three years, however, this chance visitor was to bring on the father complete ruin, upon the daughters bereavement and sorrow, upon the mother death, upon all their relatives and acquaintances persecution, prison, and misery.

There will always be men to praise and men to execrate Robespierre. The insignificant provincial lawyer had an unhappy youth and did not in the early part of his career display even ordinary ability. His first appearance in the Assembly was rather ridiculous and nobody could have prophesied his future triumph. He called himself the Incorruptible. He developed a hyperbolical and pompous style of oratory. His upward path was strewn with the corpses of his rivals. He fluminated against all the revolutionary chiefs and at last stood in the midst of an empty space. He was the master of the Convention, of the Jacobins, of the Commune, of the Army, of the Electoral Colleges, of all the Clubs of France, of the Revolutionary Tribunal. He was dreaded.

Certainly he was admired by many, but he was feared by more, for a word from him would mean the guillotine.

Then it was, on 7 May 1794, that he made an amazing speech recommending a decree by which the French people would solemnly recognize the existence of the Supreme Being, and the Immortality of the Soul. His hearers were stupefied, but then became enthusiastic. The discourse was to be sent to the Armory, to all Popular Assemblies, placarded in the streets, translated into every tongue, and distributed throughout the Universe. A few weeks before, the French had participated in the sacrilegious ceremonies of the Cult of Reason, and had applauded the exhibition of a girl of the Opéra in Notre-Dame. Now there was to be a great Fête of God.

Docile as the French were, there were many discontented revolutionaries: they had firmly believed that God was abolished. Among them was Vadier, one of the most important men of the Comité de Sûreté Générale. His long nose grew longer, his red face grew redder. His loose, bony frame was agitated like the frame of a clumsy puppet. He set to work to destroy Robespierre by ridicule. Two sinister investigators were given the task of compiling a dossier against Robespierre. They were Sénar, morose, embittered, cynical; and Héron, an unquestionable scoundrel. In the

revolutionary days such abominable secret agents could flourish, and though they knew many prisons, they, unlike thousands of better men, died in their beds.

It did not take them long to discover Catherine Théot. She was an old woman, altogether illiterate, who believed herself to be at once the daughter and the Mother of God. Paris abounded in mystagogues of this kind. The people were uncommonly credulous. Since the closing of the churches the people, deprived of the priests, whom they were accustomed to venerate, and of the pious ceremonies which, whether through sincere faith or simple tradition, satisfied their aspirations, adopted the most naïve practices in which they might find something of the mystery and poesy of the old cult. Anybody who pretended to magical powers, who could speak in a trance or read the cards, was sure of a hearing.

When life was so uncertain it seemed good to have one's horoscope cast. There were Prophetesses, one of whom tried to convert the Pope. There was the Unknown Philosopher. There were Spiritualists and Mesmerists. There were Swedenborgians and Quakers. There was a mythical Father Raphael. Old Testament Prophets went about foretelling marvellous things. But it was into the little sect of Théot that Sénar,

by a subterfuge, introduced himself. Catherine, aged, so thin as to be almost diaphanous, her head and hands trembling, entered at the sound of a bell, sustained by two assistants. The worshippers knelt, kissed her slipper, and cried, 'Glory to the Mother of God!'

Sénar was informed that he was about to receive the Seven Gifts of God. The Mother kissed him on his forehead, on his eyes, behind his ears, on the cheeks, and on the chin. Then a voice was heard: 'Son and Mother, kiss each other on the mouth!' Sénar submitted heroically to this last proof. Later, Héron was likewise subjected to this rite.

While such a ceremony was proceeding, Sénar opened a window, and at a signal the place was filled with soldiers and police. The poor folk who had sought consolation in the rue Contre-scarpe were arrested. But what had the pathetic though ridiculous incident to do with Robespierre? Vadier wanted to show that Robespierre, who had treacherously revived God, was associated with this absurd sect. Among those arrested was Dom Gerle. Among the papers of the monk was a certificate in the handwriting of Robespierre. It was a sort of *laissez-passer*, of no real importance, declaring that Gerle had marched in the true principles of the Revolution, and had appeared, although a priest, to be a good

patriot. . . . A report which would undermine the authority of Robespierre could now be drawn up.

In the meantime the Fête of the Supreme Being was prepared. In the Tuileries a great amphitheatre was constructed, according to the plans of David, the celebrated painter. A colossal statue of Wisdom was erected. Upon it was imposed a lighter structure representing Atheism; and at a given moment Robespierre was to set a flame to the figure of Atheism, which would burn up, revealing the figure of Wisdom. On the Champ de Mars a symbolic Mountain was built—Mountain, in the Parliamentary jargon, designating the side of the Assembly on which Robespierre sat. There were huge columns, grottos, pyramids, antique altars, temples; and there were to be musicians and singers and banners. In immense processions women would carry flowers, and symbolical cars drawn by oxen would impress the people. An image of Liberty, seated in the shadow of an oak, surrounded by fruits and sheaves, would be shown. To describe this theatrical day in detail would be tedious: suffice it to say that the effect was not what Robespierre intended. Only a poor burnt and blackened figure of Wisdom emerged from the spectacular flames. The colleagues of Robespierre openly mocked him.

It was the beginning of the end, and in spite of the delirious crowds, the orchestras, the choirs, the drums, the trumpets, and the banners, Robespierre returned home discouraged. He was to take a terrible revenge before the report of Vadier, connecting him with Dom Gerle and with the crazy Mother of God, completed his discomfiture—before, discredited, ridiculous, suspected, his head fell under the knife to which he had condemned so many innocent citizens.

MODERN WOMEN IN ART

IS Art an imitation of Nature or is Nature an imitation of Art? The question which Oscar Wilde posed in many pages is posed once more by the suggestion which has been made in Paris that the painter Van Dongen has invented the modern woman just as the Impressionists invented 'the lovely silver mists that brood over our river and turn to faint forms of fading grace curved bridge and swaying barge'. Has Van Dongen merely taken an existing type of woman and placed her on the canvas, or has the modern woman, looking on the canvases of Van Dongen, undergone an evolution?

It may be that the two processes have gone on simultaneously, that they have reacted upon each other, that the undoubted change in the female form has inspired the artist, while the artist has influenced the female form. In a series of pleasant paradoxes, which nevertheless have a profound truth, the most brilliant essayist of the 'nineties tried to show that Whistler actually changed the climate of London. He admitted, however, that perhaps the mysterious loveliness of fog, and the white, quivering sunlight of France, with strange blotches of mauve and rest-

less violet shadows, may have been there, though unnoticed, before the Monets and the Sisleys and the Pissaros brought them to our attention; and that there may have been sunsets before Turner and landscapes before Poussin. Still, there is a sense in which Fact is always trying to catch up with Fiction. Hamlet, though unmarried, left many descendants. Turgeniev and Dostoievski, in imagining the Nihilist, were responsible for the Bolshevik Revolution, just as Rousseau was the true father of Robespierre, just as Balzac invented the Nineteenth Century.

So it is possible that the credit or the discredit of a new conception of feminine beauty must be given to Van Dongen. Both his admirers and his detractors seem to admit his part in the launching of a mode, and the mode is not a mere fashion in dress but a fashion in physique. Only a few years ago his pictures at the Salon were regarded as incredible. They were abused as deformations. The sensation which they produced can hardly be exaggerated. Most people declared there had never been such women. Perhaps there had not, but there certainly are such women now. So Nature once more is creeping up to Art.

It is a far cry from the feminine rotundities of Rubens, and even from the rose-coloured contours of Renoir, to the long, supple lines of Van Dongen; and one wonders how it is possible for women to discard the charms of an earlier age as

they discard their crinolines. Some of us are old enough to remember the days when the ideal woman was what the French call *la belle fille*. Her femininity was pronounced. In those days—and they are not long ago—every woman conformed more or less to this standard. Now suddenly nearly every woman conforms to an entirely different standard.

Doubtless the two types existed before, and doubtless the two types still exist, but it cannot be denied that in the pre-war days one type vastly predominated, and that in the post-war days the other type vastly predominates. How has this revolution been effected? It is the eternal mystery of the relations of Art and Life.

Van Dongen in initiating one of those controversies in which Paris delights has audaciously proclaimed his purpose. 'I seek the amelioration of the feminine race,' he declares, 'by putting a model before women. I make images of an elongated slimness. I produce the slender silhouette of the woman exercised in sport, with great eyes, fringed with long lashes, smooth skin garbed in the shininess of satin, the cosy warmth of furs.' And again he has described the modern fashionable woman as a cocktail—a brightly-coloured mixture. The charm of our time, he says, is that one can mix everything: it is truly the cocktail epoch.

Sitting the other day in a quiet public garden of

Paris I observed for the first time the pedestal of a French worthy who had been sculptured in stone. I was impressed with its ugliness. The pedestal had no line because it was all ornament. The multitude of curves and angles made it grotesque. It was an eyesore in that it had no unity. But the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts demonstrated that the ornamentation of half a century ago has been rejected in favour of smooth surfaces. The essential quality of modernity is its suppression of superfluous ornamentation. The line must not be broken. This is true of the modern woman. Her robes may be sumptuous, they may be patterned and embroidered, but they fall straight. Perhaps they fall too straight, and the adoption of severe mannish clothes which has followed the close-cropping of the hair is ungraceful.

At any rate, the mode is the mode *maigre*. There is no unhygienic compression in one place to produce an exaggeration of outline in another place. The woman in these athletic days keeps herself thin—and some would say flat—but she is free and at her ease in her robes. From the point of view of aesthetics the fashion if not carried to extremes is undoubtedly to be approved. But the question remains—and I will not pretend to answer it dogmatically—whether Van Dongen, the painter of the modern woman, has invented a style or has merely interpreted an epoch.

THE ALMANAC

UP the hill on a wet Sunday afternoon came the village postman, wheeling his bicycle. He was enveloped in a hooded macintosh which shone in the rain like the skin of a seal. Surprised at his unusual apparition on his rest day, I left the window-nook from which I had long contemplated the pouring skies across the flat, bare fields, and hastened to the door to welcome him.

In the French country-side, as in the English hamlets, the postman is a real personage. He is the friend of everybody. He is not, as in the towns, swallowed up in his function. If for Wordsworth the cuckoo was but a wandering voice, the postman for the urban dweller is but a recurrent knock. He is not the knocker but the knock. He is invisible; he passes on his rounds, bearing good and bad news, unnoticed. Chesterton, in one of his stories, makes a whole world of witnesses declare that no one had been seen to go into a certain house where a crime had been committed. Yet the whole world of witnesses had seen, without seeing, the postman enter; and the insignificant postman, unobserved by all the observers, was the criminal.

In the village one runs to meet the postman, who is recognized as a living visitor. The little girl greets him with the daily question, 'A letter from Papa' (who is in the French army) 'to-day?' The women stand out on the road with their hands arched above their eyes. He is a public celebrity. So much is he alive that on this afternoon, when the rain was like the sloped bayonets of an endless array of troops passing in perpetual procession, I asked him indoors to take the tea which was ready.

My postman is a humorous philosopher. As he unstrapped his bag he announced: 'I have just finished an extra turn. I have distributed the almanacs for the New Year. How would the world know that it was the New Year without the official almanac?' He produced my copy; for every resident in France is entitled to receive the Post Office almanac. Then he began to comment on it, as has doubtless been his custom for many years. His jokes, ripened by repetition, had a whimsical, acrid flavour.

'It is, you see,' he remarked, 'arranged in six rows on this side, six rows on that. When you have gone down this column you will have grown so much older; and when you turn over half the year will have gone. To think that this tiny square of pasteboard represents twelve months of your life! At a glance one can see up and

down the months to the very end of the year. Up and down and then over! That is how it goes!’

He paused and then added: ‘For my part, I think this kind of almanac is a mistake. One ought not to see the future until the future arrives. One ought to live a day at a time. I do not want to see December thirty-first at the beginning of the year. I do not want to be reminded of the inevitable winter before spring has come. Nor do I want to be able to turn back to January when one is in June. This plan of the whole year is, believe me, a blunder. What everybody should have is an *éphéméride*.’

‘An *éphéméride*?’ I questioned.

‘An *éphéméride*,’ he repeated with emphasis. ‘A tear-off calendar, where the days follow each other one by one, not in crowds; where to-day must pass into to-morrow before you see to-morrow; where to-day, when it has once become yesterday, has disappeared for ever, with all its joys and its sorrows, cast into the fire. You take yesterday, you crumple it in your hand, and it troubles you no more. There is no confusion; life is simple with an *éphéméride*.’

‘That is the thought of Omar Khayyàm,’ I told him, and I translated into French (for one is not ashamed to quote poetry in France to the village postman):

Unborn To-morrow and dead Yesterday,
Why fret about them if To-day be sweet?

'Just so,' responded my guest. 'This almanac is like a ledger—long columns of figures which added together amount to nothing. I am tempted to draw under the sum of each month two lines to contain the total of disillusion. But with the *éphéméride* only one figure—a figure positive, a figure big and black and jolly in its fatness—shows. It is always a definite day; whereas find on this almanac, in the lines of little figures, find, if you can, the veritable day. Ouf! one may be wrong by a week. One flounders about among the dates. How much cleaner and certain is it to see the days fly, one, two, three, with regularity, so that always the right day is uppermost, and one never reaches the next until it is due, and one never reverts to the last after it is gone!'

Thus he continued to pile up his fancies about the almanac. For me, I looked out on the rain-swept expanse of fields, brown, drenched, dismal, and I wished that by some magic one could really turn the almanac so that the year began at July. The little wood of pine-trees to the right leaned like the naked masts of an armada blown in a huddle of destruction by a bitter wind. The slanting rain drawn on the window resembled the thick, close-set strokes on a child's copy-book. It was the dreariest day of all the days, and I

would willingly have lost it in the thicket of figures. I told the postman so.

'Yes, my friend,' he returned, still pursuing his fantasy. 'When the dark days come, when thoughts turn life to gall, then what is simpler, with an *éphéméride*, than to snatch off another slip and to tell oneself that the dark day has already passed? Oh, yes, I know I contradict myself. But if it is the imagination that makes life good or that makes it bad, then why not use the imagination to tear away, with a paltry square of paper, the days that we dislike? Presto! I tell myself it is gone, and when I tell myself so it is true for me. You get rid of the disagreeable days and you find the sunny days, and you can keep the sunny days as long as you please. If the calendar does not correspond to the facts, *tant pis*. It is the facts that are wrong.'

The rain, as we talked, ceased, and the sky was full of a wonderful green colour. The postman replaced his satchel on his shoulder.

'This is,' I said, 'in acknowledgment of the New Year you have brought.' And I handed him a twenty-franc billet. 'I hope it is worth so much.'

'I wish,' he answered, 'that it were the old years that I carried and not the new years. Tell me, on the balance of good and evil, has not the Old Year been worth more than the twenty-franc New Year?'

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

WHEN, recently, I left Paris, the city in which I live, to visit London again, I found the contrast of the two towns extremely interesting, and in some respects surprising. London is a man's town and Paris is a woman's town. But the epigram must not be pushed too far. Paris, if it lacks the spacious and comfortable clubs of London, has its compensations even for the sterner sex.

One was indeed startled by the number of shops in London which are essentially men's shops. In every street around the centre there are, I imagine, many more establishments which cater for the needs of men than establishments which cater for the needs of women. In Paris the opposite truth strikes one forcibly. In Paris the great dressmaking emporiums are everywhere. No longer can one speak of the rue de la Paix as the Home of Fashion—unless one uses the words rue de la Paix in a generic sense. There are far too many *maisons de la mode* to be contained in one short street. They have multiplied enormously since the war.

And then there are, meeting one at every turn, the sumptuous shows of the jewellers' windows. There are shops made gay with fans. There are furriers with their rich assortment of wraps. There are houses which specialize in dainty painted and beaded bags. There are others which contrive to exhibit artistically the quaintest and latest varieties of umbrellas and sunshades. There are stores which sell nothing but silk stockings to the strains of music. Perfumery is purchased in palaces. *Lingerie* is a veritable art. Beauty parlours and *coiffeurs* pullulate. The prettiest shoes are prettily displayed. The note of femininity is struck as in no other city.

Even the resorts for afternoon tea and dancing are more numerous than in London, although in England tea-drinking is a national custom. There are, of course, in London, far more ordinary and popular tea-shops than in Paris, but there are in Paris far more fashionable 'five o'clocks' and '*thés dansants*' than in London. In short, Paris strikes one, in its shops, in its restaurants, in its hotels, and in a thousand resorts, as a city dominated by women and run in the interest of the womenfolk.

In London, on the contrary—or at least such is my impression—the trail of the man is over it all. The shops are men's shops. The business of smoking, for example, is taken seriously. In

Paris the tobacconists make no pretension. In London every tobacconist's shop appeals to the eye. There are exhibited as attractively as possible the various brands of smoking mixtures. The pipes are shown precisely as the hats are shown in Paris.

There is exactly the same difference between the tailors' shops of London and the tailors' shops of Paris as there is between the tobacconists' shops of the two cities. London appears to be the city of sartorial masculinity. The Paris tailors hide themselves. The London tailors, whether in the West End or in more popular districts, put their goods in the window. I began to count the number of such establishments in a particular thoroughfare, but quickly found that my arithmetic was not equal to the task.

Moreover, there is about all these tweeds and rough-spun cloths a more mannish air than in Paris. One breathes the atmosphere of sport in the busy Strand. Such ladies' costumes as I saw were masculine and sporting. All these strongly-built boots and shoes spoke of the moors and golf courses. And everywhere the implements of sport. One was reminded that Londoners enjoy golf and shooting, that the youth of London plays football and indulges in athletics.

It would be absurd to forget the great emporiums which are frequented by the womenfolk.

I should not forgive myself were I to convey the impression that London neglects the fairer sex. They have plenty to see, and to do, and to buy, in these huge establishments which are dedicated mainly to them. But Paris can match, and perhaps more than match, these huge establishments; and further, the London houses, even those which are chiefly given over to women, have their very considerable sections for men, whereas in Paris the man is, relatively speaking, neglected.

The clubs alone would provide my case if it is not already proven. Think of the number of immense buildings which are consecrated to men, and then inquire where are the corresponding institutions in Paris. In my own Paris club—perhaps the largest and best known, and even the most exclusive of its kind—the ladies are encouraged to troop in to tea; and there is a mixed luncheon-room.

I never enter the imposing precincts of the London clubs, which are quiet and restful, and essentially masculine, without feeling the complete difference in the temperament of the two cities. The Parisian, one would suppose, likes to meet women in his club. The Englishman, one would suppose—though one apologizes for such a reflection on his gallantry—goes to his club to escape from the womenfolk.

These are only superficial contrasts, the reader may say. But with that contention I cannot agree. The attitude of the two cities towards what may be described as the surface things of life determines their attitude towards many other deeper things. It may well be that in looking in the shop windows of London and of Paris, and in spending some afternoons in the London clubs and in the Paris clubs, I have discovered the clue to the misunderstandings in many domains between the French and the English. One could base a whole social and political philosophy upon this special regard for one or the other sex.

I refrain from the temptation to draw a moral.

VINEYARDS OF FRANCE

THE *vendanges* have begun. Indeed, in some districts they are already finished. The great annual fête of France is always conducted joyously, but it is being conducted more joyously than ever this year. Are not the grapes rich and swollen? Is not the harvest exceptional? Is there not a general conviction that the wine will be abundant and of rare quality?

Certainly the production will not compare with that of the *annus mirabilis*, 1875, when there were over eighty-three million hectolitres, but the average is well surpassed. Specialists to whom I have spoken put the yield at sixty-two million hectolitres, and to this must be added seven millions from Algeria. When it is remembered that a fair year gives forty-five millions, it will be appreciated that the *viticulteurs* are pleased.

But one does not measure a picture or weigh a statue, and statistics about wine offend one's sense of the poetry of the grape-gathering. What matters most is the excellence of the growth, and this cannot be definitely decided for months—

perhaps, one should say, for years. Nevertheless, in the case of the grape, quantity is a good *prima facie* argument in favour of quality, and those who pretend to judge these things are already, in their enthusiasm, putting the year among the very best years.

It was, above all, in the country of Touraine that I watched the *vendangeurs* at work, though on a rapid motoring tour I also visited the vineyards much farther south. It is, of course, the Médoc, in the Bordeaux region, that is the real heart and home of the vine, but in the valley of the Loire, as well as in the valley of the Gironde, one may pass through miles and miles of fertile fields. They stretch out, sometimes on either side, divided up in tiny parcels of land, and their number is beyond counting. Each little *clos* seemed, as I hurried along, to have its own special aspect, although arranged, so far as one could see, in precisely the same way as its fellows. It was ruddier, or it was of a deeper gold, or it was both purple and yellow in infinite variety.

These patches of land, the same size, planted in the same fashion, had no muttonish monotony, but ran the gamut of colour and character, so that, when one grew accustomed to the indefinable differences, one no longer marvelled at the multitude of *châteaux* whose names they take. The soil is perpetually changing: the vineyards

lie higher or lower on the hill-side, whose slope is gentler or steeper, and the sun caresses them individually. There are people, I suppose, who would see nothing particularly charming in the landscape of these vine-growing districts. There is always something dwarfish, something artificial about the prospect.

Seldom is there that deep sense of age and comfort and firm-rooted peacefulness that one experiences in England. But these low poplars on a clear sky, these gnarled fruit-trees, these too picturesque willows, and these miniature vines planted in regular rows, in succeeding square upon square, give one—at least, they give me—an impression of daintiness, of delicate order.

It is all a giant child's garden of verses, a delightful toy of a world. Does not everything strike the English visitor as just a size too small in France—from the taxicabs of Paris to the vineyards of Touraine? Many times have I travelled up and down this pleasant land, but never have I overcome my primitive surprise at finding the vine not a great flourishing plant as high as a house, and, indeed, clambering about the houses. There are, of course, those which clamber about the houses or the palisades, but they are the casual ornamental vines or the vines of the amateur. The professional grower has, through long generations of culture, produced the

trimmed plants *en espalier*. They protrude no straggling branches, they are cut down to the height of benches. Clipped and stunted, you may say, but you would be forgetting the vigorous intensive life that swells and pushes within the prescribed bounds as poetry swells and pushes within the compressed limits of a sonnet.

With great handkerchiefs tied round their heads the women bent down over the little vines and, scissors in hand, snipped off heavy bunches. Men in blue smocks stooped under the weight of immense baskets, strapped over their shoulders. In these huge hods they carried the dripping burden to the bullock-drawn dray, which remained on the borders of the field. This was the scene that repeated itself with endless variations. The country-side displays more signs of deliberate culture than does the country-side in other countries, and that is why, to me, the vineyards of France are a symbol of civilization.

Primarily, there would appear to be no reason why France should take the foremost place as a vine-growing country. The climate of the lands on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean and of the more southerly lands would seem to be far more favourable. It is hard work and careful study that have made the wines of France what they are. I am sophisticated enough to believe that there is little in nature that is really beau-

tiful for mankind until it has been retouched by mankind, and unless it demonstrates the human capacity of ingenious adaptation.

Nothing signals the collaboration of man and Nature so well as a French vineyard. Wheat could be produced by nomads who might pass on to pastures new the following season, but the grape in perfection can only be produced by those who have settled on the soil. Somewhere I read that corn, wine, and oil have always been regarded as the principal gifts of the ground, the material bases of life and comfort, and assuredly not the least of this trinity of gifts is wine.

The carts roll in slow triumph to the press-house, where the grapes are placed in vats for the process of fermentation. Afterwards the new wine will be put in hogsheads. The method differs slightly, according to local custom, and according to the kind of wine it is sought to obtain. But, broadly, the method is that which was followed in the early days of history. It has been improved, but its basis is that of an immemorial tradition.

Everybody to whom I talked—and I talked to many vine-growers or people interested in the principal production of their *pays*—expressed the same pleasure. A good wine harvest means much to France. The cellars are being filled, and there is considerable rejoicing. Here and there in the

Midi one may hear purely commercial complaints, because foreign markets are no longer freely open. But these are incidental professional grumbles that do not lessen the joy that is being manifested all over France, in the latter days of September and the early days of October, at the successful gathering in of an exceptional harvest of grapes.

ON BROADCASTING THE FIRST TIME

MANY thousands of people must have spoken in draped studios to a little microphone, conscious that every word is reaching millions of listeners. But few of them have, to my knowledge, given any account of the curious process, and of their feelings in front of the tiny instrument which symbolically represents an immense audience—hundreds of times greater than any audience which they could address directly.

The consciousness of this immense audience is at first almost disconcerting. The lightest whisper, the faintest rustling of one's papers, the drumming of one's fingers on the table, are all registered. One stands—or sits—in the intensified hearing not of a handful of people but of several nations. There is, until one becomes accustomed to the idea of one's voice being amplified—or rather multiplied—something awe-inspiring in the experience.

That experience seems more indefinable in that the audience is invisible. One sees only an insig-

nificant-looking instrument. It would appear impossible that such an instrument is the token of millions of hearers. Its red eye glares, but otherwise it is lifeless. There is no response—nothing to indicate whether one's words are heard, whether they are appreciated or are criticized. One speaks into utter blankness, and no echo is awakened in the silent studio, in which one's voice is lonely and lost amid the heavy hangings.

It is not surprising that the operation should produce strange effects on the singers and actors and speakers who take up their position in front of the microphone. I had been informed that orators accustomed to the largest halls suddenly grow timid in the empty room. I had been informed that famous actors develop stage-fright with nobody to see them. I had been informed that the voices of celebrated singers tremble at the impassive appearance of a dumb post.

Certainly I can understand this curious self-consciousness before an innocent piece of machinery. But it is, of course, foolish, and I therefore approached the apparatus smilingly.

The international uses of broadcasting as a cementing influence, especially in Europe, have not been fully realized. Barriers of political and racial and linguistic differences can, I told myself, be overleaped by 'wireless'.

So, in availing myself of a method of communication which is comparable in cultural importance to the invention of printing, I cast aside the trepidation which, well-meaning friends had warned me, accompanied the first entrance into the draped studio.

Nevertheless, it was queer to see the little light appear, indicating that a vast invisible audience was awaiting my discourse. It was queer to observe the master of ceremonies speaking to the tiny instrument, bidding it good-day, and informing it that I was about to begin my lecture. It was queer to watch the master of ceremonies tiptoeing softly away and motioning to me. I was to talk. To what? To whom? To that red light which fixed me like the eye of the Ancient Mariner. Instinctively I looked around for the audience. It was not there. It was scattered over several lands. Distance no longer existed. From the studio I could convey my thoughts to a man or woman, sitting comfortably in an arm-chair, hundreds of miles away.

There was nobody in the room save myself and the master of ceremonies. Probably these reflections caused me to hesitate. I remarked an imperious wave of a hand, and I began to harangue the microphone.

Yes, it was decidedly queer. There was no sound but that of my own voice, to which I found

myself listening. There was no response, and I really wondered whether anybody could possibly hear me. Did I constitute my own audience—I and the master of ceremonies and the microphone? Queen Victoria complained that Gladstone was in the habit of addressing her as though she were a public meeting. I was addressing the microphone as though it were a public meeting. Was there not something absurd in it all—or something miraculous?

The master of ceremonies was making frantic gestures to me. He was waving his hand downward. I took this to mean that I was unconsciously pitching my voice too high—as if I, not the instrument, had to make my voice heard hundreds of miles away. That was stupid. The sounds would be better conveyed if the voice were pitched in an ordinary key. I must not forget that simple fact again—it is not my own exertions which annihilate distance and cause me to be heard from Paris to Glasgow.

But the silent signals continue. Am I still committing some silly mistake? Ah! I have it! I am speaking too fast. The sounds are being jumbled together. One must speak softly and slowly and distinctly.

There is a sign of approbation from the master of ceremonies. Henceforward all will go well. I speak quietly, calmly, without hurry. I am talking

to the man in Glasgow and the woman in Marseilles as though they were sitting a few yards away, in the same room, listening, reclining in arm-chairs, as I discourse.

It is over. Something is switched off. There is still no response, no applause, no shouts, but I know that I have been heard. The master of ceremonies comes forward. 'You spoke admirably,' he said. 'Just a little too loud and too fast at the beginning. Afterward it was absolutely right.'

Who would not be thrilled at the knowledge that such means of communication have been evolved? Between the animal kingdom and mankind there is a tremendous difference, which can be summed up in that wondrous word—communication. There are, of course, many other differences, more essential differences, but at present I am chiefly impressed with the thought that the whole efforts of humanity have been directed toward the improvement of means of communication. First oral communication, then pictorial communication, afterwards communication by conventional written characters, until printing was invented, and by books and newspapers the entire world was brought together in community of thought.

Now there is telegraphic and telephonic and wireless communication, over greater and greater

distances. Truly human progress has always been expressed by easier and more effective means of communication, and you can reduce culture to better communication. Civilization implies that men, no matter how far off they may be from each other, can know about each other, tell each other their experiences and their discoveries, exchange thoughts, discuss problems, cultivate friendships, and become aware of their solidarity, their interdependence, their brotherhood.

ULYSSES

NO book has ever been more eagerly and curiously awaited by the strange little inner circle of book-lovers and *littérateurs* than James Joyce's *Ulysses*.¹ It is folly to be afraid of uttering big words because big words are abused and have become almost empty of meaning in many mouths; and with all my courage I will repeat what a few folk in somewhat precious *cénacles* have been saying—that Mr. James Joyce is a man of genius. I believe the assertion to be strictly justified, though Mr. Joyce must remain, for special reasons, caviare to the general. I confess that I cannot see how the work upon which Mr. Joyce spent seven strenuous years—years of wrestling and of agony—can ever be given to the great public.

What, it will be asked, is the good of a book which must be carefully locked up, which only a handful of people will read, and which will be

¹ Whatever credit or discredit must fall upon the first reviewer of Mr. James Joyce's *Ulysses*, I must accept. I reprint, to fix a point of historical literary interest, my essay which appeared, with the approbation of Mr. J. L. Garvin, in the *Observer* of 5 March 1922. It broke a conspiracy of silence.

found unspeakably shocking even by that little handful? But one must not talk about the utility, the wisdom, the necessity of a work of art. It is enough to know that Mr. Joyce felt that he had to write *Ulysses*, and that accordingly he wrote *Ulysses*. Of his sincerity—the sincerity of an artist—there can be no doubt. I suppose he wants readers, but he is perfectly prepared to do without readers. An expurgated edition? Not if his labour were to be entirely lost would he consent to cancel half a line! He would rather that nothing were printed than that all were not printed. Personally I may consider him misguided; personally I might find much to write about the folly of a fixed idea. But one does not, one must not, argue with authors. Whatever virtue there is in Mr. Joyce, whatever value in his work, is there because he will listen to no advice and brook no impertinent discussion. You may like or you may dislike *Ulysses*, and you are entitled to express your opinion of its merits or demerits, but you are not entitled to demand that it should be other than it is; you are not entitled to dictate to Mr. Joyce what he should do. You have to take it or leave it. This is how he is. This is what he feels about the human comedy.

He makes the painter who plumes himself on putting in the warts exceedingly foolish and

outmoded, for he paints not from the outside but from the inside. Obscenity? Yes. This is undoubtedly an obscene book; but that, says Mr. Joyce, is not his fault. If the thoughts of men and women are such as may be properly described as obscene, then how can you show what life is unless you put in the obscenity? This may not be your view or mine, but if it is Mr. Joyce's he has no option but to fulfil his mission as a writer. If I understand him aright he sets out to depict not merely the fair show of things but the inner truth, and whether it is dubbed ugly or beautiful, or is a heart-wracking inextricable mixture and mystery of ugliness and beauty, has nothing to do with him as artist. He would be untrue to himself and to his subject were he to tone down and leave out. Surely it is not necessary to say that his purpose is not pornographic? The pornographic writer can always get his books published. If it is advisable he will employ the blue pencil. But Mr. Joyce, unable to obtain publication, would certainly have grown indignant at the idea of the blue pencil. The story of his difficulties is known; the prosecution of the *Little Review* of America which printed some chapters; the stony stare of commercial publishers; the largely accidental meeting with private persons willing to take the risk of having this gigantic volume of over seven

hundred pages printed in France for uncertain subscribers.

The expectation that these difficulties and the belief in the genius of Mr. Joyce aroused in the restricted circles of literary craftsmen is, in my experience, unprecedented. Those who have read the earlier books of Mr. Joyce have realized that here is a man who can write. 'We are mighty fine fellows nowadays,' cried Stevenson, 'but we cannot write like Hazlitt.' And many of us have felt like that about Joyce. There are phrases in which the words are packed tightly, as trim, as taut, as perfect as these things can be. There are fine ellipses in which a great sweep of meaning is concentrated into a single just-right sentence. There is a spot of colour which sets the page aglow. There is a point of light which gives life to the world as the lamplighter gives sudden life to the street. Here is erudition transfigured by imagination. A piece of out-of-the-way book knowledge or two lines of a silly jingle which we heard when we were boys—they fall wonderfully into their place. I detect a certain slackness here and there, as is inevitable in a book of such length; but I think that the craftsman will, forgetful altogether of the ethics of the book, its amazing a-morality, and completely careless of the content, best appreciate the sheer power of craftsmanship.

As for the matter, I think I can best convey some idea of *Ulysses* by reminding the reader how odd is the association of ideas when one allows all kinds of what are called thoughts, but which have nothing to do with thinking, to pass in higgledy-piggledy procession through one's mind—one's subconscious mind, as it is called in present-day jargon. Psycho-analysis is, I believe, very strong about this. To give an example: I find myself looking blankly at a polished teapot; the elongated reflection of my face suggests a horse; there's a flashing picture of a ride in the woods; King Charles hides in a tree; Puritanism; early closing; Chesterton and beer; exercise to reduce fat; Sandow; wrestling; but it is unnecessary to carry the sequence of images farther. It is rather an amusing game to sit jotting idly down the train of unforced thought. In the polished teapot the universe is contained, and all the thoughts and pictures that ever were can be poured out of it.

Now the purpose of Mr. Joyce is, of course, much larger than to jot down all the incongruous notions that rattle around the arena of the cranium; but, described narrowly, that is what he does. Has anybody done it before? I do not know, but I am certain that no one ever did it at such length and with such thoroughness. It is

obvious that if one tries to put down everything in the life of a man, a single day in that life will fill many volumes. The external events are really of little importance except as forming a starting-point for reflection. Mr. Joyce's style is such that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between what is taking place externally and what is taking place internally. The internal action is put on the same plane as the external action. Mr. Joyce indicates both with infinite humour and with extraordinary precision. One feels that these things are essentially, ineluctably, true. These are exact notations of trivial but tremendous notions, and these are truly the inconsequential but significant things that one says to oneself. There is Mr. Bloom at the funeral wondering how he can discreetly shift the tablet of soap which he has purchased and put in his tail pocket. As he passes the gasworks in the mourning carriage he wonders whether it's true that to live near a gasworks prevents whooping-cough. A rat in the cemetery inspires horrible and humorous speculations. There are comic and sublime contrasts. The irrelevance and irreverence of the attitude of mankind before the great facts are remorselessly laid bare. Gross animality and subtle spirituality intermingle. Blasphemy and beauty, poetry and piggishness, jostle each other. But, in the end, one becomes tired of beastliness always breaking in. There is one chap-

ter devoted to the reverie of a woman, and her monologue *intérieur* is, I imagine—and am bound in all honesty to say—the vilest, according to ordinary standards, in all literature. And yet its very obscenity is somehow beautiful and wrings the soul to pity. Is that not high art? I cannot, however, believe that sex plays such a preponderant part in life as Mr. Joyce represents. He may aim at putting everything in, but he has, of course, like everybody else, selected carefully what he puts in. Has he not exaggerated the vulgarity and magnified the madness of mankind and the mysterious materiality of the universe?

BOULEVARD TREES

THESE are days when everything is challenged, but one had hardly believed that any iconoclast would be so bold as to propose the slaughter of the Paris Boulevard trees. The trees which line the principal thoroughfares of the French capital help to give it its pleasant appearance. The Grands Boulevards fascinate Frenchmen and foreigners because of their animation, their brightness, their variety, their handsome monuments and luxurious shops and crowded café terraces—but above all because of their trees.

Two members of the Municipal Council have put forward radical proposals for the removal of 'obstructions'—as they call them—on the Grands Boulevards. What do you suppose are the 'obstructions'? The trees, the kiosks, and the New Year *baraques*. They would make a clean sweep of the *baraques*, the kiosks, and the trees. The Boulevards, they say, are no longer a promenade. They are no longer designed as an agreeable place for a leisurely stroll as they were in the days of the Tortoni and the Maison Dorée. They have become a commercial thoroughfare with congested traffic and with no room for idlers. Moreover,

the trees are destroyed by the fumes from hundreds of thousands of motor engines. Their foliage lasts only four or five weeks in the year. Therefore, away with them!

Pray do not be alarmed. It is quite unnecessary to raise the cry of 'Municipal Councillor, spare that tree!' The reasoning and even the facts are wrong. Certainly the Boulevards are crowded, but there are, among the throngs bent on business, more loungers than ever, and many thousands of people on the café terraces occupy what have been called the front stalls of the finest theatre in the world. Nor have the trees suffered as is pretended. They are green for a good part of the year. When in the winter they are brown or bare they are still an inseparable part of the incomparable townscape.

Parisian sentiment, Parisian notions of urban beauty, would suffice to repel the attack on the trees. The Parisian loves the open air. He is enamoured of arboreal perspectives. But, curiously, he prefers the paved open air and the town trees to the wooded spaces of the country. If he had to choose between trees and automobiles on the Boulevards he would doubtless choose trees and insist that the automobiles take another route.

This is not a local question. It is not a matter that Paris, in the last resort, would have the right

to decide for itself. Paris belongs to the world and the world would have something to say if there were serious danger of the Boulevards being stripped of trees. The Boulevards without trees are unthinkable. This is an international matter, and if necessary it must be referred to a Diplomatic Congress or to the League of Nations.

By all means let us have underground roads for automobiles, as has been suggested. Let the traffic rush and roar beneath our feet. But leave us the Boulevards for our delectation. It appears that in 1900 there were only 172,000 vehicles of any kind in Paris. Eighteen of them were motor taxicabs and 618 were private automobiles. The rest were bicycles, or horsedrawn carriages. Now we are told there are 660,000 vehicles of transportation and most of them are automobiles, big and little.

The horse has practically disappeared in this age of machinery. That is a real loss, and one regrets the open *fiacres* drawn by friendly horses and conducted by genial *cochers*. We have not succeeded in saving the horse as a feature of the Boulevards. We must succeed in saving the trees.

It was bad enough when the automobile put the old-time Boulevardier to flight. It cannot be permitted to end the Boulevard. For the Boulevard would not be the Boulevard if the side-walks were narrow, and the trees vanished, and on the restricted café terraces we gazed not

upon an unceasing panorama of pedestrians but only upon an endless chain of automobiles. The vandals would send the foot passengers into subterranean tunnels with moving floors which would carry them like a flying carpet from point to point; while on the treeless Boulevards, overhead in the light of day, the automobiles would be given pride of place. It is the reverse that must happen: the Boulevards must remain the Boulevards and the mechanical traffic be driven below the street.

From the beginning the Boulevards have borne their *platanes* and *marronniers*, which in the round of the seasons are green, red, grey, or a tangle of black branches. Any well-conceived system of urbanism would, instead of suppressing the trees, multiply them. Future towns should be vast parks. They should have a sylvan aspect. In the midst of the stone and iron there should be plenty of verdure. It is doubtless impossible to realize this ideal in existing towns, but it is inexcusable to surrender a single tree along well-planned thoroughfares. Happily Paris is not so reactionary. The Municipal Council will not risk a revolution by espousing the cause of wheels versus trees. This is a false alarm and the Frenchman and the foreigner, if they cannot sit under their fig-trees in the midst of bounteous nature, will still be able to sit in the shadow of the chestnut-trees in the midst of the bright and brisk Boulevards.

BLUNDERS

AN amusing book which should be helpful to those who would write good French (or English for that matter) is *Le Musée des Erreurs*. The authors, Curnonsky and Bienstock, have made a selection of blunders of all kinds. It must not be supposed that the 'best' authors escape. They are put in the pillory for their inadvertencies. Victor Hugo, Zola, Dumas, the *Temps*, the *Matin*, are cited side by side with the most ignorant politicians. In the chapter entitled 'Incoherences' we read: 'Isadora Duncan, the barefoot-dancer, has shaken the dust of Berlin from her sandals.' From a popular romance the following is taken: 'He tripped over a corpse. By the light of a lamp he saw that it was the guard, who had his head split open. He was completely dead.' A comical newspaper description of a distinguished man is quoted: 'Under the appearance of a mathematician and a savant, he enjoyed the most robust temperament.'

Madame de Thèbes, the famous soothsayer, is

'so imposing that one is tempted to address her as Madame la Marquise. But that first impression is quickly dissipated. Madame de Thèbes is a woman of the world who knows how to put her visitors at their ease.' An excellent example of false eloquence is quoted from a Russian newspaper: 'It is not a useful bird but a voracious vulture. This Magyar bird of prey would devour the head of a sheep while expecting the sheep to remain alive. In the Twentieth Century that is impossible.' Ponson du Terrail, a sensational story-teller, was never more surprising than when he wrote: 'The old gentleman paced to and fro, alone in his park, his hands behind his back, reading his newspaper.' Here is an announcement: 'In consequence of the death of Madame Vautier her business will continue to be conducted as before.'

A good deal of fun is poked at journalistic jargon. One may pick up any journal and discover for oneself phrases similar to those here given. But the journalist, who is obliged often to write with his eye on the clock, may be excused for his use of *clichés*. One reads: 'Perhaps these contradictory assertions are *ballons d'essai* intended to feel the pulse of public opinion.' Again: 'It is the rule in Denmark that a Frederick shall succeed a Christian, and a Christian succeed a Frederick, whatever may be the name of his pre-

decessor.' Or: 'All the former Ministers met separately to put themselves in accord on the attitude to be observed.' Further: 'Under a disagreeable exterior and a huge moustache the old soldier hid a sensitive heart.'

But the language of the politicians is even worse. The notorious General André cried: 'In my fight against Clericalism I have succumbed before finishing my task. Discouraged by my example my predecessors abandoned the strife.' Here is the opening phrase of a resolution passed by a committee: 'Considering that the enemies of the Right and of the Left are closely united in a parallel but converging action against the Government . . .' A deputy exclaimed: 'The time has come to put a brake on the inertia of the Conservative classes.'

Mixed metaphors are common: Thus, a Minister declared: 'When Jaurès comes to dance on a tight rope in order to remain in the lap of the Ministry he will quickly be called to order.' Here is a pearl of Parliamentary eloquence: 'It was in the old leather-breeches that beat the hearts of our brave forefathers.' A variation of this ingenious fancy runs: 'The heart which beats under the blouse of the worker is often as courageous as that which beats under the tall hat of the bourgeois.'

Other parliamentary blunders are: 'When we

take a thorn from the foot of anybody we should ask ourselves what we should put in its place'; 'I have consulted him and he has replied affirmatively—No'; 'We have opposed to this project of law a vigorous *non possumus*. I might even say a *non possumi* for there were several of us.' M. Viollette, when he was the Rapporteur of the Finance Commission, said: 'It should be understood that the elasticity of the Budget is not rigid.' There was surely some confusion in the mind of the orator who proclaimed: 'No longer can Jericho beat down the walls of a town by blowing in his trumpet.' An indisputable verity worthy of M. de la Palisse was expressed by M. Dejeant: 'To exhaust a country is not to fortify it but to enfeeble it.' The confusion resulting from a multiplicity of amendments led a deputy to demand 'the maintenance of the suppression of the re-establishment of this clause.'

A few specimens of the mistakes of advocates at the Palais de Justice will be found equally amusing. 'She is only a poor country girl, Messieurs les Jurés, like the majority of you'; 'My client contracted unfortunate habits: he went every day into a house of debauchery well known to the Court'; 'Like Absalom flourishing the jaw-bone of an ass he flung himself upon his adversary with his stick uplifted'; 'When that woman comes out of prison there will be some

one waiting to receive her in his arms. I hope the tribunal will do the same'; 'I always find that argument in the mouths of those who have lost their heads'; 'Imagine the astonishment and the grief of the honourable witness when, returning from his work, he found his wife in bed with her head split open and the door broken down.'

Administrative decrees and reports are represented by the following examples: 'Owing to the cases of sunstroke caused by the exceptional heat wave the Governor of Paris authorizes the soldiers to wear white trousers'; 'The entry of vehicles of all categories is forbidden to persons in a state of uncleanness'; 'The twin brothers were born on March 4 at Katreg in the same place and on the same date.'

The pomposity of scientists and the extraordinary language used in sport are not spared. One laughs heartily too over the libretto of Faust, while the book of words of La Tosca is no less grotesque. Why have musicians always been compelled to accept ridiculous verses? The wonder is not that opera is not more popular but that it has survived at all.

Imbecilities such as follow can be found in all languages: 'The captured zebra does not procreate and even becomes sterile after several generations' (G. Roux). M. de la Ferronays, the deputy,

asks if the minister does not consider that a professor abandons his neutrality in teaching that man descends from the monkey (*Journal Officiel*). 'Yes, we will go,' said Pierre, who turned, seeking his hat to wipe his eyes' (Zola). 'That hand, shaken in space, cried for help' (Lavedan). 'They explained by gestures that they were Spaniards' (*Le Matin*). 'By this act of vandalism the work is completely lost and its value is therefore considerably diminished' (*L'Echo de Paris*). 'In spite of his strong constitution the King has reached his 75th year' (*La Gazette*). 'The miniatures of the Middle Ages show them in their beds. The crowns on their heads symbolize their royal blood. The painter did not intend to imply that they wore their crowns during their sleep' (*Langlois et Seignobos*).

From a list of *clichés* I select the following: 'The order of the seasons has absolutely changed'; 'Art has no country'; 'The hydra of anarchy lifts its head'; 'The fête was prolonged far into the night'; 'The frankest cordiality did not cease to reign'; 'The impenetrable decrees of Providence'; 'The human heart is an inextricable labyrinth'; 'After bread instruction is the principal need of the people'; 'The male accents of the Marseillaise'; 'Perfidious Albion'; 'The modern Babylon'; 'Well-informed circles'; 'The sword of Damocles';

'The bread of exile'; 'The standard of revolt'; 'The secular arm'; 'The political chessboard'. The list could be extended, to use another *cliché*, to infinity.

Misquotations and wrong attributions have a place apart. Thus *L'Auto* writes of 'the witty Perrault in his *Thousand and One Nights*'. *L'Intransigeant* remarks: 'It is La Fontaine who said "A wise enemy is better than an imprudent friend".' The line '*La critique est aisée et l'art est difficile*' is nearly always attributed to Boileau instead of to Dancourt. In *Femina* a reader asks this quaint question: 'Will you be kind enough to tell me in what language Tolstoi wrote *Anna Karenina*—in Russian or in French?' Even the nationality of Shakespeare is doubtful if we are to judge by this extract from *La Vie Méridionale*: 'Shakespeare, Racine, Corneille, Molière, Victor Hugo, can be read easily and are not thereby diminished. They understood the genius of the French language, whose foremost quality is clearness.' The *Figaro* writes: 'M. Campiglia remembered the still more energetic expression of Charles Dickens in the *Vicar of Wakefield*.' *La Revue* notes that certain works were prohibited in Poland, and adds: 'Among the French books were *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe*.'

THE KEEPER OF THE WOOD

ACROSS my favourite path in the little French wood the corpse of a giant oak-tree lies, a poor stripped trunk. When so many men have fallen on the battle-field I know not what melancholy sentiment moves my heart at the sight of this slain monster which yesterday was flourishing in the pride of its hundred years and to-day is a mere log, decapitated, dismembered, the white wounds, where its dozen arms have been hewn away, contrasting pitifully with its black body. The big amputated branches, themselves as thick as trees, are already sawn into commercial lengths, and are arranged in numerous piles, measured and ready for carting. The leafy locks of the shorn Samson still lie green in great mounds. One would not have imagined that there was so much foliage when it was spread overhead in the heavens. It is not a tree; it is an aerial town that has been rudely tumbled.

A guard with his ancient and rusty gun and his black dog greeted me. He was slowly perambulating the wet woods in vain search of malefactors, keeping an eye on the gangs of Spanish

woodcutters (he persists in calling them Italians, these Southern Latins being all one to him), and earning his keep, if only by the air of rustic authority which he has cultivated like an art.

When I expressed my regret at the destruction of the wood, he regarded me suspiciously for a moment, wondering if I were criticizing his master, the wealthy Paris banker who lives out at Saint-Germain. The owner has probably only seen his wood once—when he bought it. It was not its beauty that persuaded him to purchase, for he at once gave orders that the resources of his new possession should be exploited immediately to the utmost. Wood will never again sell so dearly in France as now when coal is scarce. Therefore chop, demolish without mercy, and sell while you may. To-morrow fuel will be plentiful once more; but the woods which constitute one of the glories of the pleasant land of France, which are scattered in a profusion of beauty from the Channel to the Mediterranean, will they be restored?

My guard had true respect of property and of proprietor. He dimly discerned the implied reproach, and he became sternly silent. I began to wonder whether he would remind me that I was trespassing. But he had respect, too, for the Parisian, and presently he deigned to explain.

'Consider,' he said, 'there are here no fewer than thirty *stères* of wood for burning from these branches that you see. That is over a thousand francs, *n'est-ce pas?* . . . Think, too,' he went on after a prolonged mental calculation, 'of the *courrées*, the twigs that will serve for lighting the fire. How many bundles do you suppose there are? A hundred? Two hundred? Five hundred? A thousand? And remember that *cent bourrées* cost thirty-five francs. Take again this trunk. How much do you think it is worth? Oh, the beautiful timber! Oh, the rich mine of wealth in this one log! I wish, Monsieur, that I had the money which will be paid only for the *bois de charpente*.'

They have only begun to bring down the ancient guardians of this golden alley, which is bordered chiefly by beech-trees. As we ascended it together—the keeper, the black dog, and I—the splendour of the woods made an irresistible appeal to my spirit. We walked in deep layers of leaves, yellow irregularly patterned with red. The road dipped down to the little bridge, whose stone parapets are sunken in the mould of generations, and then mounted steeply, still between old trees, to the crest of a low hill. There is something almost sacred in such a way. One wants to tread softly as between the pillars of a cathedral. The primitive worship of nature is deep-rooted, and

nowhere does that sense of solemn silence that is almost a prayer enter the soul as in the midst of autumnal trees.

Even the keeper, habituated like the sacristan of a church, felt in some degree this mystery of the woods. We did not talk as we ascended. At the top we looked down on a scene of desolation.

On the slopes of the long hillocks the woodcutters were at work. They had made waste great tracts of land. Not only had the patriarchal trees been laid low, but the young saplings had been ruthlessly cut down with two strokes of the axe. The sides were almost bare and blackened with frequent fires. Here and there the burning of the leaves from the branches still scattered clouds of smoke. As I looked along and saw the intertangled trees whose turn had yet to come, with their infinite variety of greens, of yellows, of reds, dark pines contrasting with the silvery slips of shining birch, feathery foliage, delicate as filagree work, side by side with the broader sweeps of larger-leaved trees, I trembled for the fate of all that fair forest land.

Regarded without reference to their deadly task, the woodmen in the ravine were grouped picturesquely enough. They were busy sawing the logs, methodically depositing them in measured piles. Their *cabanes*, made of earth and brushwood, sent up little white puffs from rickety chim-

neys. . . . And yet the predominant impression was one of ravaged loveliness.

My companion lit his pipe, thoughtfully spat, nodded his head in the direction of the world of workers, and slowly said: '*Vous voyez. C'est quelque chose, ça.* The patron has done well. He will make a mint of money! Look, if you begin counting from that corner, where the stream bends, there are . . . ' and he began aloud a progressive computation of the number of finished piles that awaited the carters, and of their prodigious value.

He was awed by the reflection that the woods were wealth. He had never realized it before, but now he bowed down before the golden calf, and regarded the proprietor, who had come to translate loveliness into terms of cash, as a genius. Nobody before him had had the brilliant notion of thinking of trees as *billets de banque*. In the long experience of the keeper other owners had only made discreet clearings for the sake of the wood itself. But now that the new idea was being put into execution, that trees had become first and foremost merchandise and the woods were a workshop in which profits were earned, the old keeper could only admire. So does capitalism corrupt us all, and the spirit of gain (even though it be not our own) capture our modern world.

'Do you not regret the disappearance of all these fine trees you have known from a boy and the slaughter of the young innocents?' I asked him, disquieted at his enthusiasm for the new order of things; 'their destruction is pure loss for you at least.'

He reflected. There was something in my point of view. These barren hills where immemorial beauty and quietude had reigned, this luxuriant life annihilated. . . . But his brow was clouded for a mere moment. The new idolatry had taken hold of him. His eyes went over the stacks one by one and brightened, and they glowed with the fervent joy of a religious devotee as he turned to the wonderful prospect of the richly clad hill-side yet to be exploited. He repeated his *credo* with the rare zeal of a convert.

'Imagine,' he cried, 'the price of all that! *On n'a pas idée de ça*. Strange that no one dreamt of chopping down all these trees, without value where they stand, but of riches untold when made into firewood!'

CLEMENCEAU'S TESTAMENT

DEMOSTHENES is Clemenceau. Clemenceau is Demosthenes. Such, one cannot help feeling, is the ultimate sense of the remarkable little book that the aged French statesman has written about the Athenian orator. It is in some respects an autobiography. Not that the external facts of the two men's lives, were they set side by side by a new Plutarch, would run on parallel lines. After all, Clemenceau won his war and retired in his old age (but will he ever be really old?) to a pleasant life of meditation and literary work and bucolic diversion. He suffered, it is true, from the ingratitude of his country, which soon put its war heroes on the shelf, and kept the ring for the sports of the lesser politicians, usually incompetent. Much of his work was undone by his successors, but at least he had the satisfaction of having saved France from defeat.

Demosthenes, on the other hand, failed, though his failure does not discredit him. His eloquence for fifteen years was directed against Philip of Macedonia. Nothing could turn him from

his purpose. Greek independence was finally crushed. Demosthenes went into exile. After the death of Alexander, when the Greek States again rose in arms against Macedonia, Demosthenes returned in triumph, stimulating his compatriots to greater efforts. Nevertheless, the confederate Greeks were beaten, and Demosthenes, pursued by his enemies, poisoned himself in the temple of Poseidon.

Yet if there are considerable differences between the careers of the Frenchman and the Athenian, Clemenceau has discovered spiritual affinities, and there is no doubt that he uses the life and character of Demosthenes, and the events which occurred three and a half centuries before Christ, as a sort of parable on which he makes wise comment. It must not, however, be supposed that the French statesman and philosopher directly identifies himself with his subject, or draws a direct moral. It is for the reader to understand ancient days in the light of modern days, and modern days in the light of ancient days.

A fairly safe deduction is that whatever a man admires immensely he resembles in some degree. Clemenceau chiefly admires the pertinacious patriotism of his hero. Admirers of Clemenceau are most struck by the steadfastness of his labours in the cause of his country. He, too, inspired the people when they were faltering. Yet he is

aware of the dangerous disinclination on the part of his compatriots to pursue a straight course. French intellectuals, like Athenian intellectuals, have lively imaginations, and are apt to start fresh hares for the mere joy of the chase. They are dazzled by illusions, and quickly tire of their toys. Yet the Athenians, as Clemenceau tells us, were not incapable of heroism: 'In previous wars they had magnificently proved it. What they lacked was the power to follow up. Missing in them were tenacity, foresight, a beneficial if not brilliant courage which would prompt them to prepare for war in time of peace, and to carry out, without weariness, obscure but necessary tasks.' Can one not hear, in these accents, a warning, perhaps a reproach, to France?

Clemenceau has declined to make any political utterance for years, but those of us (among whom I am proud to number myself) who from time to time come into contact with the venerable statesman, know well what he thinks of the handiwork of those who have replaced him. His opinions are certainly not flattering for them, but when he, in a witty phrase, makes a vital criticism, there is always a twinkle in his eye. There is something saddening, but there is also something amusing, in mankind's refusal to be guided by the experience of the past. 'The scandal of history,' says Clemenceau, 'is the periodic triumph of brute

force, the repeated destruction of spiritual grandeurs.'

Doubtless Demosthenes was not concerned with the fate of the world in general, though if Athens had prevailed civilization would to-day be a tremendously different thing. There might have been no exploitation of the East, and Greek influence, without being deflected by Christianity, might have spread in purer forms farther westwards. But Demosthenes, though his harangues may be speciously quoted, cared only about Athens itself, which he regarded as a Holy City of Civilization, which should have enjoyed Divine immunity, Olympian security. Can one not discern the allusion to France?

When Clemenceau is not living in the bourgeois house in the rue Franklin in Paris, he dwells in a simple peasant retreat near Saint-Vincent-sur-Jard, with the roar of the Atlantic echoing on the Sables-d'Olonne. He is eighty-six years of age, but his verve is inextinguishable. He talks gaily, not as one who is crushed by disillusion, but as one who finds entertainment in the follies of the human spectacle. He follows a strict routine, taking walks along the beach, riding in his motor-car to market, where he exchanges spirited pleasantries with the fishwives and peasant women as he selects his wares. He has for the children a word of laughing wisdom, whose meaning escapes

them as they build their castles. He loves solitude, and pulling his battered hat over his eyes he wanders in deep contemplation. Under the straw-thatched roof of his cottage, or in the garden, which is sometimes flooded when the tide is high, he reads whatever books come to his hand. Why should one choose? Books at least are seldom disappointing. As for the garden there, too, is an absence of order. Flowers grow where they please. There is no path in the chaos. With what gusto he praises a rose-bush, which he says is better than a parliamentary seat! Flowers have many virtues, but is not their chief virtue their silence?

He, too, the Master in the garden by the sea, has fallen on silence, but he writes the thoughts which are his after a long life of unceasing activity. The book on Demosthenes, which he composed in the intervals of heavier work, is slight in volume, but it is stuffed full of significance for those who know how to read it. It is nothing short of a political testament. There are French critics who would have preferred it to be more direct, less subtle, not fashioned upon a partly fictitious account, a dubious interpretation, of the story of Greece. They would have had unmistakable references to the crisis which shook the world in 1914, and which has not yet passed.

I think they are wrong. Clemenceau has endeavored to sweep away the accidental, and to

deal only with what is eternal. They have pointed to possible errors. These errors are utterly negligible. It is the salutary lesson which matters. Clemenceau moves in an atmosphere of the heights, above the minor ephemeral excitements of the day. He rounds off his existence in nobility of thought, and if any man has a right to be heard it is he. To condemn him because, standing at the close of his career in face of the gigantic mirror of the ocean, he, without false modesty, conscious that he too has played his part, salutes his illustrious predecessor as a brother, would be supremely foolish. Clemenceau is enfranchized from stupid diffidences, and he marks out his position in history—he, the champion of France, beside Demosthenes, the champion of Athens. When time has rolled on and most of the visages of to-day are effaced, history will confirm the place of Clemenceau.

At the most critical moment of modern times he gave a soul to a people. If Napoleon is France, wrote Emerson, then he governs a nation of lesser Napoleons. Certainly Clemenceau, for at least a year, governed a nation of lesser Clemenceaus. Is that nothing? It is one of the greatest things that can be said of any man. It was not the effect of chance. Now it is the mode to denigrate Clemenceau, and to deny that there are superior necessary men. That is because we have

shrunk back to smaller stature, and have no leaders who are big enough to become the mighty representation of ourselves. Says Clemenceau, of Demosthenes:

'Is it nothing to have revealed oneself as a man of courage and of determination to the uncertain crowd which, searching a guide and finding him, hardly recognizes him? Is it nothing to have conquered power without low intrigue, to have exercised it without fear, and after defeat (should we not rather read victory?) to have left power without remorse, without regret? Is it nothing to have never bowed to tempests which bent other heads? Is it nothing to have lit and borne without trembling the torch which will be a beacon for the generations to come?

There are many superb pages of French prose in this book, elevated, suggestive, eloquent, close-packed with noble thought; but the note on which it ends, whether it be applied to Demosthenes or to Clemenceau, or to any rare person who deserves it, is in its simplicity the most magnificent of all. 'When Dionysius of Halicamassus describes Demosthenes as the greatest orator of all times, I venture to find the eulogy insufficient, since speech can only be a vain noise if it is unaccompanied by action. In the fullest sense of the word, Demosthenes was a man. That is enough. Rightly regarded, it is much.'

THE TURNING TABLES OF JERSEY

WHEN I dip into the *procès-verbaux* of the strange spiritualistic seances held from September 1853 to July 1855, as printed by M. Gustave Simon in *Les Tables Tournants de Jersey*, I am amazed at the credulity of great men. Here is a record of the conversations of Victor Hugo with the spirits of the illustrious dead. I do not know whether I should be shocked or impressed, whether I should laugh or become solemn, as my eye encounters the names of the famous friends of France's greatest writer. There appear in swift succession Chateaubriand, and Dante, and Racine; Marat gives his opinion on the Republic; Charlotte Corday is her own judge; Robespierre talks of Danton and Mirabeau; Socrates responds to the accusations of Aristophanes; André Chénier completes his verses—which, curiously enough, are written in the authentic style of Hugo.

Indeed, everybody is made to speak in the manner of Hugo. Shakespeare, for example, de-

livers himself with true Hugoesque flamboyance. He says, expressing himself through the medium of the dancing table, 'I do not despise my work, any more than the statue despises its pedestal. I stand erect upon my creation. You say, He treads it under foot. No. I do not march disdainfully on Hamlet. I mount superbly on the high platform of Elsinore, and there, instead of speaking with the ghost, I speak with God. Every great thinker when he goes into the tomb treads the last step of his work. I am the Vanquished of God. I am the Ambassador of the Divine Victory. I blow into the trumpet behind the chariot of the Eternal, and you are astonished that my fanfare proclaims Jehovah and not Shakespeare.'

Naturally, Shakespeare chooses the French language for his poetry. He admits frankly that the English language is inferior to the French, and he agrees with the suggestion of Victor Hugo that the French are much more his compatriots than the British. There is a sort of competition between Hugo and Shakespeare. Hugo suggests the line:

'L'astre éternel éteint les terrestres flambeaux.'

Shakespeare then repeats his own:

'Sur nos astres éteints allumer ses flambeaux.'

Thereupon Victor Hugo demands: 'Have you

any observation to make?' And Shakespeare replies: 'I prefer your verse.'

One of the company remarks to Shakespeare that his hesitations indicate an astonishing difficulty of composition. Surely when the poet leaves behind his prison of flesh his thoughts should encounter no obstacle and should flow limpid and strong?

Here is Shakespeare's reply: 'The thought, in the language of the sky, sings and lives without travail. It inhabits the Word. But when it descends from the sky to the earth it is obliged to leave behind its wings, like a bird which enters its cage. It must walk and not fly. It puts on the heavy sandals that it threw off on the threshold of the grave. I fall because I speak. I stumble because I walk.'

Luther appears to throw new light on the life of Jeanne d'Arc, of Mohammed, and of others. Molière consents to make rhymes. It is to be noted that Aeschylus and others have considerable difficulty in giving a literary form to their ideas, while such personages as the Shade of the Sepulchre, which Hugo can equally call up, dictate verses as easily as prose. The Shade of the Sepulchre is a frequent figure at these seances. What we are accustomed to regard as abstractions take shape. Thus the Spirit of Criticism comes upon the scene. He is sometimes severe in his

judgments. Always he employs the epigram. Balzac, he says, is the warden of the human heart. George Sand he describes as the fallen woman who redeems woman. Voltaire's philosophical work is immense, but his literary work is infinitely small. Théophile Gautier is the jeweller of words. Alfred de Musset is the poet of orgies. Alexandre Dumas is a waltzer.

Occasionally there are comic interludes like the following:

Good-day, imbeciles.

Who are you?

The Lion of Androcles.

Have you a communication to make to us?

Interrogate me in verse as you would Aeschylus or Molière.

If we had expected you we would have prepared some verses, but those which we might improvise would not be worthy of you.

The Lion of Androcles evidently thought he was being mocked, and exclaimed: To kick like that shows that you are asses. Adieu!

I do not propose to quote the opinions of Jesus Christ, on Druidism, on Christianity, on the French Revolution: one cannot treat *The Turning Tables of Jersey* with sufficient reverence to avoid the suspicion of blasphemy in reproducing the alleged revelations of Hugo's interlocutor.

It was Madame de Girardin—the delightful

Delphine Gay—who persuaded Victor Hugo to experiment with a three-legged table. The record of the seances was kept by Auguste Vacquerie. There were present Victor Hugo and Madame Hugo, Charles Hugo, François Victor Hugo, Adèle Hugo, General le Flô, and other friends of the family. Hugo has been dead now for forty years and the *procès-verbaux* which everybody knew to exist had been carefully kept until Gustave Simon thought proper to give them to the world. There cannot, I think, be any doubt about the authenticity of the *procès-verbaux*.

The editor admits that it is possible to find the language of Hugo in the responses of Plato and of Isaiah, but this is one of the mysteries of the transmission of messages from the *au-delà*. It seems certain that Victor Hugo himself believed in these phenomena. To treat them with raillery and sarcasm is inadequate. There are many suggestive and illuminating things dictated by the table, although one must be permitted downright laughter at times and scepticism always. There are shrewd discussions on literature, and admirable observations on religion. There is much excellent poetry.

It is to be noted that Victor Hugo was himself critical, denouncing contradictions, pointing out obscurities, signalling evasive and equivocal replies. When Hannibal puts forward his view of the mili-

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tary genius of Napoleon, for example, Victor Hugo is not in agreement. Nobody who is familiar with the facts can dispute the perfect good faith of the participants, the production of incontestable phenomena, and the neutrality of Victor Hugo in the presence of results whose explanation escapes us. But was Hugo the unconscious accomplice of the turning table? Did he not, with his vivid imagination, his indefatigable verbalism, his extraordinary physical energy, use the table as a pen—wield it unawares as an instrument of self-expression?

SECRETS OF THE GONCOURTS

WHAT are the secrets of the Goncourts? Will they ever be released? Or are they fated to remain hidden in the Bibliothèque Nationale? Certainly all kinds of influences are exercised in the effort to suppress them. It is whispered that the Goncourts noted day by day the most damaging admissions of their contemporaries, and some of those contemporaries are alive to-day. It is hinted that if the truth were told about the men who have made the Third Republic, that Republic would collapse in flaming shame. But it is difficult to believe that the unpublished part of the book contains so much dynamite. Even though its statements are true, which is doubtful, the demolition of a few false reputations, which belong to the past, cannot matter overmuch. Be this as it may, the authorities carefully conceal the secrets.

The story of the Goncourt 'Journal' resembles the story of Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*, a portion of which remains unknown to all but a few persons, and will not see the light of day until the moment for unveiling the mystery is deemed to have ar-

rived. For my part, however, I do not believe there is anything very dreadful in the Goncourt 'Journal'. Let us who hope to read it one day not look for startling revelations about celebrities; rather it is piquant anecdotes, mordant observations, and unflattering judgments that are to be hoped for—or feared, if you happen to be the victim of this inky vitriol.

Certainly it piques one's curiosity to learn that the suppressed parts are again considered too unkind for present publication. Edmond de Goncourt himself held them up by will till 1916. The Académie Goncourt then decided that as we were in the midmost of the war it was still inadvisable to authorize their appearance.

When the war was over we were informed that the Académie Goncourt had done a merciful thing. It had decided in its wisdom that its founder would have wished to give a further period of grace to those whose reputations he had intended to guillotine. There was a reprieve until 1925; and those who had resigned themselves to their unhappy fate breathed again. The year 1925 has come and gone and still the 'Journal' is held up.

How far is this to-do exaggerated? Is the whole business a hoax? Is there really cause for alarm, or for palpitating emotions? I am not prepared to say definitely that there is much ado

about nothing, but my opinion is that there is no need for all the fluttering that has agitated so many breasts.

The Goncourts, let me recall, were two brothers, who founded the school of writing which distinguished itself by the name of Impressionism. The younger brother, Jules de Goncourt, died as long ago as 1870, at the age of forty years. The elder brother, Edmond de Goncourt, survived Jules for twenty-six years, dying in 1896 at the age of seventy-four. It would be difficult to determine which of the two was the truer artist. Their names are inseparable; and although Edmond continued to write after the death of the cadet, it is, according to all reports, upon the notes of Jules that he worked. Nevertheless, those who have read *Les Frères Zemganno* and later productions will have discovered that the sensibility shown increases almost, as one critic says, to the point of disease.

The style develops its curious characteristics until it breaks away from the accepted rules of syntax. That style is the most important point to note about their work. They themselves declared that they were 'the persons the most nervous, the most sensitive, the keenest searchers after the suggestive notation of indescribable sensations, the least susceptible of satisfaction with the gross "something like" of their prede-

cessors'. To express themselves they invented this temperamental language which they call 'artistic writing'. M. Le Goffic well describes it when he says it is 'all shivers and nuances, tormented, incorrect, variegated with neologisms and with rare epithets, violent and precious at the same time, and, instead of containing the expression of their sensibility in a little order, only serves to exasperate it'.

Their output when they worked together was enormous. They possessed all the refinement and the mannerism of an extreme civilization. They delicately painted the life of the boudoir and the coulisses, and expressed the faded graces and arts of a vanished century. Later they developed the romance of observation in which the intensity of the impression and the precise study of the *milieu* are everything.

When a portion of their 'Journal' was first published it created a great deal of noise. One can well understand it, though the effects have paled to-day and the epoch seems very remote. Our concern now is with the unpublished portions, and if they justify a tenth part of what has been written about them in French literary papers and said about them in French literary circles they will have some day not only a literary success but a *succès de scandale*.

A HAPPY FAMILY

SHELTERED under the shoulder of a great green cliff, the little seaside village lay. It would be difficult to find it on the map. Too tiny is it to figure even in the Normandy guide-books. Although it is on the coast, it has no beach—the tide comes up to the dunes on which the tethered sheep crop the rank herbage; while the high rock, which protects it from the winds, is cut sheer to a higgledy-piggledy confusion of black boulders enclosing deep pools. Therefore, since holiday-makers demand bathing above all, the village is unfrequented, and almost unknown.

Yet the surrounding country is as luscious as any in Normandy, and amid the apple orchards and the wheat-fields are churches and châteaux whose stones are eight hundred years old. Here are the beauties of nature and the remains of the monuments of men. In the pleasant activities of to-day we are vividly reminded of the vicissitudes of yesterday. Moreover, if one climbs the cliffs and gazes from the heights between the trees, one sees across the bay, standing as it has stood for many centuries, the most wonderful construction in Western Europe—the famous Mont-Saint-Michel, the Eighth Wonder of the

World, as Madame de Sévigné called it—an inaccessible granite island with thick, fortified walls tapering to a spire.

The tiny place, with its handful of houses in which a few hundred people live, is therefore, despite the map-makers, well worth visiting. In this respect it is similar to many other places in fertile and historic Normandy. But at least, thought the town-dweller in search of repose, there would be found in this placid, forgotten village a harbour of refuge from the cosmopolitanism that is a conspicuous feature of the usual French resorts.

Along the Riviera there are more foreigners than French. Deauville and Trouville and the rest of the coastal towns are invaded by men and women of all nationalities. In Paris itself it is more than probable that one's taxi-driver, one's waiter in the restaurant, one's fellow-guest in the hotel, are not French; while on the Boulevards, in the Latin Quarter, at Montmartre, and at Montparnasse, those whom one jostles have come from the ends of the earth.

But here, where the world is quiet—as Swinburne sang—it would surely be possible to escape from the international throngs. How should the international throngs have ever heard of it? The French themselves have scarcely heard of it. So we believed when we cast our net for a short sojourn under the sheltering shoulder. That

tent is merely figurative: in reality we entered a charming rustic hotel, with spacious gardens, and behind it a meadow with cattle grazing, and a terrace with fowls and rabbits, and beyond an arbour beneath the trees, from which one looked out on a panorama of hills and valleys and streams; and, in the distance, the sea and the solitary Mount.

There was never a greater error. In the gardens, as we walked, voices came to us too guttural to be French. They were the voices of two athletic young wanderers from Holland. We exchanged greetings and continued our promenade. Taking tea under a striped umbrella, like a gigantic mushroom, was a party of Russians. This was a surprising beginning. But when we sat down to dinner, entering into conversation with the couple at the adjoining table, we discovered that they were Italians. From the far end of the room loud English conversation reached us. Before the day was over we had made the acquaintance of Americans and of Germans. This, then, was a French inn in a lost corner of the Normandy coast in 1927. It was like an annex of the League of Nations.

‘How did you find your way here?’ we asked the Dutch boys.

They told us that they were students who belonged to a travelling club, and every year they ‘discovered’ some unknown part of France. They were not content to follow the beaten

track. They tried to shun the cosmopolitan haunts.

'You are not altogether successful this year,' we remarked.

'That is true,' they answered, 'but, at any rate, there is no multitude. We take long excursions on foot every day, and we see the real French countryside. It is so delightful and so different. More and more our comrades are coming to France.'

The Russian general and his wife were cheerful companions. They had found their way to France, after the Revolution, via Constantinople and Berlin. In the evenings the general was the liveliest member of the company. He joked unceasingly—except when he asked permission to bring down from his room the records of Chaliapin, which he placed upon the gramophone and listened to in solemn silence. One day he told us his story. He had been especially attached to the household of the Czar, had been imprisoned by the Bolsheviki, had escaped, had swept the streets at Saint-Cloud, and had now opened a shop in Paris. Certainly one would never have suspected that this happy man had undergone hardships. Why had he come to this little village? That he scarcely knew—it was just accident.

As for the Italian pair, the husband was an authentic count who had become involved in political troubles and had been accused of plotting against Mussolini. Therefore he was an exile.

But life was sweet in France—sweeter, he insisted, than in Italy at this moment.

The elderly Englishman, a retired lawyer, had boyhood associations with France, and was now building a country cottage in these parts. He had scoured the coast before he had found the place of his dreams. With the Germans, who were quiet, attentive, and exceedingly polite, he had long political discussions. They had the friendliest feelings for France.

The Americans, man and wife, had, we found, been everywhere in France: they had motored from town to town, and their only complaint was that France seemed no longer to be French.

'France is as French as ever it was,' we replied, 'and it is not this collection of different nationalities in a little hotel of a little French village which will make it less French. It is we who are more French.'

We were sitting after dinner, Dutch and Germans and Russians and Italians and English and Americans, in the typically Norman *salon*, with old plates decorating the walls, with polished brass and copper utensils above the mantelpiece of the huge chimney, in which hung a big *marmite*, with a spinning-wheel in a corner by the oak settee.

'Well, I must say,' exclaimed the American, 'I never thought that Europeans could make such a happy family!'

ON GUIDE-BOOKS

THERE is really nothing more entertaining than a guide-book. Why it should be put among the books that are not books I do not know; for it is the book pure, the book which is interesting for its own sake, and not for some perfectly irrelevant reason of adventitious art. No trivial consideration of style recommends it. Its merits—or its demerits, though no guide-book can be wholly bad—are definite and not debatable. It is good because its contents are good, and not because its presentation tricks you into reading it. I am an assiduous reader of guide-books, and, provided the facts are pleasant enough, an enjoyable hour is provided by the red- or blue-backed indicator of motoring-roads, of twelfth-century churches, of historic houses, of local legends, of celebrities associated with street or town. . . . An enjoyable hour—that is a great deal more than one can reckon on obtaining from the average novel.

The most ambitious guide-book to Paris is, of course, that which had Victor Hugo for introducer and boasted contributors such as Sainte-Beuve, Renan, Berthelot, Michelet, Gautier,

Dumas, About, de Banville, Sardou—to mention only a few of the illustrious men of 1867, who were aware that the preparation of a guide-book was a work worthy of the highest talent. I cannot count the days I have spent over this wonderful book, and never have I been bored except when the authors tried to write literature instead of getting on with their business.

Since then it is no exaggeration to say that several thousand guide-books to Paris have been written. I have myself added to their number. Most of my friends in Paris have done the same—or mean to do so some day.

A good guide-book, intended to replace Baedeker—or at least to compete with it—has been lately published. Every line is excellent except when it ceases to be a guide, and becomes a commonplace book. When it tells me, for instance, that the church of the Sacré-Cœur is unsightly, I am tempted to fling it through the window and explode: ‘Who the dickens asked for your opinion? Why do you try to fit out visitors to Paris with ready-made judgments? Tell us where the Sacré-Cœur is and all the information you like about it, but for goodness’ sake don’t repeat conventional remarks of this sort. We can see for ourselves whether it is unsightly or not.’ Again, I object to being told that the *ouvreuses* at the theatres are a plague.

I don't happen to think so, and don't want a guide-book to tell me so. That is not a fact; it is an opinion.

But if I take exception to these minor blemishes I hasten to say it is really an admirable production—though of course it should be read at home and left at home. If you begin to carry a guide-book about with you, you are apt to become such a conscientious sightseer that you will remain all afternoon on the steps of the Opéra, for example, and never get inside. There is such a multiplicity of things to see that the only way of seeing them is not to see them in detail—not, unless you have special reasons, to try to distinguish between the Chapu and the Gumery.

If for nothing else, this guide is better than the Baedeker it seeks to supersede, in that it does not contain an essay on French art, as does my copy of Baedeker. All comment on art is, of course, nonsense; but this Baedeker nonsense—written by a German gentleman who 'made authority' in his day—represents the ultimate pomposity and is the quintessential stupidity of art criticism. The present guide does not altogether escape from the temptation to pronounce pontifically and comically that such-and-such a picture in the Louvre is admirably composed but 'far from refined'; but generally it judiciously sticks to ascertainable facts, and will not allow

itself to succumb to the besetting sin of writing literature instead of making a fine book.

Unfortunately it is difficult to keep up to date in an account of the Louvre, for the directors, without the slightest regard for the visitor or the editors of the guide, have lately added the 'Mort de Sardanapale', by Delacroix, and 'Les Funerailles de Phocion', by Nicholas Poussin, besides some Rembrandts and Ingres, Courbets and Corots, Davids and Rousseaus, and Primitives. To tell the truth, however, it is possible to overlook these pictures if they do not happen to be mentioned in the guide-book, and yet spend a profitable and passable afternoon—when the rain makes outdoor sightseeing disagreeable—in the Louvre. It should not be mistaken for the large stores of the same name.

Guides are never sound about prices. I should like, for instance, to find the decent flat which is rented to visitors at from 150 to 300 francs a month, and I should be obliged if the editors would state where is the furnished room at 75 to 150 francs a month. Balzac would have made an ideal editor of a guide-book. He would certainly not have made any mistake about matters of money. A guide-book should aim at being almost as accurate in this respect as a Balzacian romance. On eating, the editors are better. Thirty francs for a moderate meal in a first-class restaurant is

possible—provided you do not order a bottle of wine, which will absorb the whole of your thirty francs, and you are careful not to be beguiled into taking expensive extras. I turn up my Baedeker and I find that once one could have soup, fish, roast, salad, sweets, dessert for three persons with two bottles of good wine in the highest-class Paris restaurants for forty francs. One wonders how it was possible for profligates and prodigals to dissipate fortunes in those days!

WHITEWASHING BLUEBEARD

FIVE hundred years after the burning of Joan of Arc, accused of witchcraft, she was rehabilitated and canonized, and is now regarded as the patron saint of France. Five hundred years after the execution of Gilles de Rais, the bravest and richest and most beautiful companion-of-arms of Joan of Arc, an attempt is being made to revise the judgment passed upon him. The coupling of the two names is inevitable, but it is nevertheless shocking, unless one accepts the view which Shakespeare and Voltaire and others less enlightened than Shaw held about Joan of Arc. She has become for most people a heroine divinely inspired. He has become the Bluebeard of legend.

Time has softened the appalling truth about Gilles de Baval, Baron de Rais. Nobody shudders to-day at the nursery story of Bluebeard. The lightest of operettas have been composed about him. His name no longer has a dreadful sound.

It is curious that Gilles de Rais should be remembered as a man whose seven wives were the victims of their curiosity. Perrault invented this *conte* for children. The reality is much more terrifying. It is the grimmest history in the world, and cannot be told by anybody possessing less talent than J. K. Huysmans, who in *Là-Bas* has touched the lowest depths of the horrible.

The facts are too well established, it would seem, for the *curateurs à la mémoire* of Gilles de Rais to clear him of his crimes. Nevertheless, in accordance with the laws of France, it is possible for those who think an injustice has been done to the most stupendous criminal lunatic of all time to bring an action in the courts for the quashing of the verdict of five centuries ago. A young French lawyer, M. Maurice Garçon, and a doctor, M. Jean Vinchon, believe they have made a discovery which permits a re-trial. The announcement has interested historians, savants, librarians, and literary men, and they have constituted themselves an association of defenders of the memory of Gilles de Rais. It is impossible to take very seriously, in spite of one's respect for some of the Frenchmen who are concerning themselves in the case, the suggestion that the feudal Baron has been deeply wronged.

For what it is worth, however, the assertion is that one of his châteaux—the Château de Machecoul—is built upon a seam of gold. Therefore, it is argued, he could not have been guilty of the practices alleged against him, for the main charge (as it is distorted by his new-found defenders) is that he made sacrifices ordained by black magic to Satan to obtain gold. Why suppose a recourse to sorcery when the precious ore existed under his feet?

Unfortunately for this argument, the records show that Gilles de Rais squandered his vast fortune and became comparatively poor, selling his estates for a mere song. After the glorious days spent in the companionship of Joan of Arc he developed a madness compared with which the madness of the Marquis de Sade was sanity itself. His own confession is as detailed as well may be. That he did endeavour to engage in diabolical transactions cannot be doubted. He sought 'gold, knowledge, and power' by appealing to the 'evil spirits'. There is no kind of blasphemy, sacrilege, and black magic known to the Middle Ages of which he was not guilty. But he certainly did not enrich himself; and everything points to his having been a perverted panderer to nameless lusts.

For scores of miles around his estates the country-side was terrorized. No child was safe. He hunted boys and girls of tender years and tortured them indescribably. Sometimes the children were brought to him by a mysterious old woman in a black gauze mask. More than eight hundred cases have been charged to him, and although there may be considerable exaggeration the evidence of the unspeakable crimes found when at last the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities dared to move against this powerful madman is conclusive.

Huysmans suggests with some reason that the religious exaltation which he experienced in the Joan of Arc days was converted into a mystical sadism and satanism. After the trial of Joan of Arc the young man—though he was Marshal of France he was only twenty-five years old—withdrawed to his château of Tiffauges, where he indulged in an almost incredible luxury. That he was demented is, I think, shown as much by his amazing and ruinous extravagance as by his fervour for demoniacal rites. Gilles de Rais called to his castle the most reputed of the magicians. Then began those experiments which entirely destroyed the reason of the baron, and after unparalleled debauchery he committed the crowning folly of invading, with two hundred armed followers, the Church of Saint-Etienne de Mer Morte, and of putting the Whitsuntide worshippers to flight.

Will the French courts really resurrect this frightful story of the Middle Ages? Will they really whitewash the blue-bearded monster? Certainly it would be difficult to bring witnesses against him. The ushers will call in vain in the resounding passages of the Palais de Justice for complainants. But the records remain; and the only persons who are likely to gain by the process are the ardent and audacious lawyers, who, if they receive no fees, will receive considerable publicity.

TOY BALLOONS

THERE are balloons of all colours and sizes. They add a note of gaiety to the green background of town trees. They are like the rich fruit and flowers of those trees. Gorgeous and gigantic they blow and grow and give conscious delight to the children, and perhaps less conscious delight to the adult population strolling by the park gates.

Usually they are at the park gates or in the parks themselves, but they are also to be seen on such frequented promenades as the Champs-Élysées. They come like the tulips in the spring-time, and like the tulips of the Tuileries, swaying and nodding in the wind, are the emblems of fancy, of happiness, and of hope.

Or they are to be observed as one wanders along the Boulevards, held in the hands of tiny tots who have accompanied their nurse or their mother on a shopping expedition. The large emporiums, one may suppose, are not purely intent on business. They sell their wares, but they take every opportunity of giving away, without financial considera-

tion, these airy symbols which provide momentary pleasure.

Smooth, shining, multicoloured bubbles, they are blown into the bright sunshine. It is the spectacle of the balloons which persuades me that Paris, often regarded as sophisticated, really retains something of its old naïve childlike love of simple things. The childlike quality of the French capital has indeed frequently been commented upon, but it is expressed in nothing better than its thousands of balloons.

The vendor of balloons is usually an elderly woman, but the vendor is sometimes an elderly man. She—or he—carries a long pole at the end of which are clustered scores of swollen pink and blue and green balloons. It is like a huge stalk topped by gigantic blossoms. While he and she remain, Paris will preserve a modicum of that fantasy which marks the French. There are doleful people who pretend that this fantasy is disappearing. They say it is menaced by the modern rush and rattle. Menaced it may be, but that it persists is proved by the street processions of *Mi-Carême*, by the elaborate dressing-up of the popular festivals, and by the balloons.

Around the balloon vendor stand open-mouthed children. They look longingly on the nodding spheres. The hurry and scurry of life goes on. The traffic proceeds in a thick, slow stream. The

tramcars clatter, the taxicabs try to dart in and out, the impassible policeman, steel-helmeted on an impassible horse, calmly directs the vortex of vehicles. But there, a few paces from the road, is embowering foliage and a fountain, and against them a bunch of balloons struggles to escape into the gun-blue sky.

The little boy or the little girl pleads with the mother or the nurse. Perhaps there is a moment's opposition, for the purchase of a balloon must not become a matter of course, must not become a commonplace everyday event. It must be a rare treat or it will lose its charm. The glamour will go as quickly as a balloon bursts if possession is not something to be obtained after a tiny resistance.

But the mother means to buy a balloon, and her face brightens, and she approaches the vendor, and the child receives the gift with ecstasy.

Now the balloon trails behind the child on a long string. It tugs softly at its moorings, and the child clenches its little fist with unnecessary energy. Somehow the balloon, though but a toy, conveys the idea of aspiration. It would soar into the sky. It wants to be free to mount above the leaves, to ascend to some giddy height nearer the sun.

There is fun in watching its flight, but there is

fun too in feeling its straining on the leash. Balloons are made to mount, but before they fulfil their function they must provide a tethered pleasure, a milder amusement of anticipation.

In spite of the effort to keep the balloon down it sometimes emancipates itself. There it flies suddenly, a gay blob against the blue.

The child hardly knows whether it experiences dismay or rapture. It is fine to see the balloon fly so softly, so gracefully, but it is sad to lose this image of delight.

It was good to possess it and it is hard to lose it. Yet balloons which are kept to the ground too long will shrivel and come to an inglorious end. It is better, perhaps, that it should take its upward course, and that the child, craning its neck, should gaze at it as it mounts beyond the tree-tops, becoming smaller and smaller to the eye of the boy or girl who watches, with a curious emotion, its ascensional career.

Up, and up, and ever up! It may vanish from sight, leaving the imagination mystified. Or it may suddenly explode in mid-air, disappear swiftly somewhere in the empyrean. Is not that a glorious end? Is it not better that it should expire in mid-air above the tree-tops than that it should shrink on its string held by the hand of the child?

Besides, are there not other balloons bunched

together in multicoloured beauty, swaying like gigantic flowers on the huge stalk of the vendor?

It is all very childish, you say, but for my part I hope I shall always be childish enough to rejoice in the vendor of balloons by the gates of the Luxembourg Gardens or in the Champs-Elysées, and in the conflicting emotions of the child who possesses and then loses one of these smooth, coloured bubbles.

A PRIME MINISTER'S BOOK

M. EDOUARD HERRIOT is too good a writer, is too cultured, too erudite, too poetic, to have devoted himself to politics in a country where Parliament is discredited and the politician keeps his footing by constant intrigue and by pandering to an unpleasant clientele. When I read *Dans la Forêt Normande* by Herriot I could not help regretting that its author is chiefly known for his share in bringing about a financial muddle, and for the various party episodes, more or less savoury, with which his name is associated. How much better, I thought, would he be occupied in giving us from time to time such interesting and—I do not hesitate to say—noble works as this description of Normandy, with a thousand reflections, historical, social, and botanical. In the same way one is sorry to see the magnificent talents of M. Painlevé, one of France's most distinguished mathematicians, and an authority on modern scientific invention, wasted in the Chamber and in Ministerial offices where he loses dignity and behaves with less skill than the average politician. One feels that the Palais-Bourbon

should be left to those who have no other career.

Certainly M. Herriot might have chosen differently. Many years ago he gave us an excellent study of Madame Récamier. Now he gives us in the course of his book on Normandy a curious portrait of Marat, the Friend of the People, who was assassinated in his bath by Charlotte Corday. I do not always agree with M. Herriot in his appreciations of the demagogue who was the instigator of the September massacres and was responsible for the most sanguinary measures taken during the French Revolution. Some of the calumnies which have been poured upon Marat may now be spared him, but it is not necessary therefore to canonize him, any more than it is necessary to regard Charlotte Corday as a sort of revolutionary Joan of Arc. But M. Herriot appears himself to be undecided, and after beginning to defend Marat against Michelet and Taine—who for once are in accord—he ends by admitting his faults. Perhaps Marat has never, as Herriot suggests, been judged impartially. Perhaps it is difficult even now to regard him with sufficient detachment. He ‘smells of blood’. He is an apostle of robbery and of murder. He is a partisan of Dictatorship, that is to say of a tyranny which the Revolution set out to overthrow—a Bolshevik, in the popular conception of the term,

before Bolshevism. Herriot attempts a synthesis such as, indeed, is furnished by the *rapprochement* of Marat and Charlotte in the Musée de Versailles. David, whose centenary has been celebrated, represented Jean-Paul in his bath of blood; and in the same *salle* Hauer has depicted the gentle assassin Charlotte, blue-eyed, with clear regard. The Revolution, says M. Herriot, without interrupting its work, endeavoured to understand, and at least to respect, these two souls who were equally intrepid. They were perhaps both victims of Rousseau.

How did this book come to be written? The vicissitudes of political life gave M. Herriot a little leisure. How should he occupy it? He took a holiday in Normandy, he refreshed his spirit, he admired the forests and the cathedrals, he soaked himself in the records of the country, and he set down his impressions in a volume which cannot be regarded as a guide-book for the tourist, but is full of substantial thought and packed with colourful pictures.

He begins, this man of letters, this lover of art, this amateur of archaeology, this student of history, by a fine dissertation on the wooded regions of Andaine, Ecouves, Persaigne, and Bellême. He shows us the hierarchy of the undemocratic trees—the oak, the beech, the ash, the elm, the pine, the sycamore, and the birch. He is lyrical

about them, as he is even about the lowly under-wood. He discourses on the heather, the rushes, the ferns, and the mushrooms, with their hats on their heads like Jews in a synagogue. He tells us about the animals of the country-side. These are capital pages. Then he traces the vestiges of the Gauls, the imprint of Rome, and passes to a consideration of the masterpieces of Gothic architecture which abound in Normandy. Particularly do I like his chapter on La Trappe of Soligny, in which he evokes the figure of Armand de Bouthillier, Abbé de Rancé. 'M. de la Trappe,' as M. Herriot says, 'died at the age of 74 years, after having passed thirty-seven years in the world, thirty-seven years in solitude, and all his life in torment.' The Abbaye de La Trappe was founded in the twelfth century, but was reformed by the Abbé de Rancé in 1662. The Trappists, as is well known, observe especially severe rules. Less credulous than Chateaubriand, M. Herriot does not accept the story of the conversion of Rancé. According to the old version he visited his mistress, the Duchess of Montbazon, not knowing she was dead, and saw her head separated from her body by the medical men, because the coffin was too short! This is doubtless pure fiction, yet it is so horrible that it seems almost impossible for anybody to have invented the gruesome explanation of the 'tourment de M. de Rancé.'

THE LAST BOHEMIAN

IT is possible that in a strictly accurate sense there are still Bohemians (by nature not by nationality) in Paris; but with the apostasy of Hégésippe Joucla the modern skurry has at last converted into the most conventional of citizens the man who for me represented in its quintessence the spirit of Bohemia; and with his transformation—a transformation that appeared incredible—a phenomenon which has the air of finality has emerged. If Hégésippe Joucla can wear cuffs and a clean starched collar and work daily from morn till eve in a Government office for a fixed salary each month, the ultimate possibility has been reached. Miracles may not happen at Lourdes. But a miracle has happened on the Boulevard Saint-Michel.

Revisiting that leafy thoroughfare of the Latin Quarter the other evening I encountered on the sheltered terrace of a café (not a cheap, dismal little café but a large and chic establishment) my old acquaintance. He was scarcely recognizable, and I betrayed, in my fumbling greeting, the astonishment that seized me at the sight of the old fierce beard no longer uncombed but smooth and glossy. Hégésippe had on a respectable blue jacket, with a white handkerchief sticking out of the pocket a thought too far; he wore a

bowler hat, very slightly exotic; and his trousers, if a trifle conspicuous in pattern, were of the ordinary cut and were creased even to excess.

Think of him in the old pre-war days of poetry! Ragged and unkempt, he spent his days in talking of art. He was eclectic in point of literary masters. Sometimes he proclaimed—and with what fervour he proclaimed!—that art began with Baudelaire. There were periods when Mallarmé represented for him the *ne plus ultra*. He was in turn a disciple of Paul Fort, of Jean Moréas, of Francis Jammes. The most strenuous diversities of style, the most changing contrasts of poetic dogma, did not affray him. He adopted them all, fought for them all, fought against them all, and again fought for them all. He adopted every new label. He has been a Decadent, a Parnassian, a Symbolist, a Romantique, a Naturist, and has professed a dozen other cults besides; and he has belonged to two or more camps, whose doctrines were in deadly opposition, in the same soirée. He has argued for preciosity, he has argued for simplicity. He was swept by every movement and washed hither and thither on the waters of literary dispute. But always was he faithful, in matters of dress and of manners, to Paul Verlaine.

He carried negligence in clothes and in person to a degree that was rare even in the vagabond

days of the Quartier. In the sunny gardens of the Luxembourg, leaning shamelessly against the balustrade of the verdant basin, he was a disgrace to the Muses. Gaping holes and yawning fissures were not the worst. It would almost seem that he cultivated a crass dirtiness. His unbrushed and untrimmed beard, flying in the wind, covered his face from his eyes to his ears. The collar of his velvet coat was sprinkled with pellicules; and his boots were thick-coated with accumulations of the dried dust of the year. But he always attracted a crowd of young students, some moved by curiosity, some by mockery, but most of them genuinely eager to listen to the opulent orotunda of his eloquence, which was apparently addressed to the impassive circle of old-time Queens of France on their pedestals among the trees.

These were his best moments; for when he carried his oratory from cabaret to cabaret, at each one becoming a little less sober, at each one gathering a new knot of mockers and admirers, including a somewhat disreputable female following, he was scarcely amusing.

And yet there was something likeable about him. Of the sincerity of his sudden passions and of his equally sudden recantations there is no doubt. He had real talents which might have assured him of comfort in his life; and if he chose

another way he did so because liberty, as he conceived it, and a constant preoccupation with poetry and its artifices, were worth while even at the cost of discomfort. He has even produced—not written—verses of considerable art and feeling, which he recited sometimes with effect. He was never sulky, seldom angry, always vivacious. Often he has slept *à la belle étoile*, but when his friends have offered to provide him with a settled situation he has refused haughtily and with a proud sense of injury, preferring to pay the price of passing his nights on the Pont-Neuf for the pleasure of being free to babble of Guillaume Apollinaire, of Paul Claudel, or even of the latest twenty-year-old founder of a typewritten review devoted to the most original conception of the poetry of the future. For he was in art always on the side of the Bolshevik.

This, then, was the disorderly individual who, now dressed in fashion relatively correct, was reading *Le Gaulois*—that journal of the aristocracy of the Boulevard Saint-Germain!—by the feeble light of the dying autumn day. He had almost the spruce appearance of a clerk in a Government office.

That was in effect what he was, as he dolefully confessed before I had time to question him. I looked at him and mumbled an amazed, an incredulous, greeting; and he laughed at my sur-

prise, made me sit down by him, and with a wry mouth announced:

'*Me voici—un bourgeois!* Yes, it is true. Good-bye, my old days and my old ways. I am employed in the administration of *la patrie*. I gain eight hundred francs a month. I am dressed like the respectable father of a family. I keep a budget of my expenses. *Enfin*, I am the most miserable of mortals.'

'You exaggerate,' I told him. 'You are far from unhappy. You cannot deny that it is better to dine regularly than to dine *au hasard*; that it is preferable to sleep in bed than to pass the night in admiring the moon; that there is an unexpected poetry in feeling that the citizens are at the mercy of your goodwill and efficiency, that you are that most indispensable tyrant of mankind, an Administrator.'

'To think, *mon vieux*,' he replied, 'that you, even you, do not sympathize!'

'Pardon,' I said, 'but I do. I sympathize with you for all you have lost; but also I congratulate you on all you have gained. Admit now there are advantages in being a Bourgeois, just as there are disadvantages in being a Bohemian.'

'True,' he answered, shaking his head sadly; 'but the advantages of my present career are merely material. What do I not relinquish on the spiritual side? Where are my disciples?

Scattered to the winds! Those who loved to listen to my words—not always wise perhaps—are lost. And I am that despicable thing—a *rond-de-cuir*, a leather cushion resting contentedly in an official chair.'

'How did it happen?' I asked.

'It happened because I found myself alone, deserted. No one had time for my . . . commentaries on the margins of poetry-books. And, as you know, I have never been apt at anything in my life, so that I am, after all, an ideal person for a functionary. It was a general movement, and I can never resist new movements. All my fellow-Bohemians are in Government offices, and I could not remain isolated, a voice crying in the wilderness, a spirit restlessly wandering in vain search of vanished companions. I succumbed, and I am what you see.'

'What of the future?' I demanded.

'The future?' he cried. 'There will never be the old Bohemia again. Life is too grim, too tragic, too pregnant with the reality of these latter years for us to play at Nero again. The world is a new place, and the old things have perished. No more can one murmur with a sort of royal languor:

Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la décadence,
Qui regarde passer les grands Barbares blancs,
En composant des acrostiches indolents,
D'un style d'or où la langueur du soleil danse.

NINON DE LANCLOS

NO more remarkable woman has ever lived than Ninon de Lanclos—or L'Enclos, as Saint-Simon spells the name. She was the friend of all the illustrious men and the celebrated women of her epoch. In a work which M. Emile Magne has produced, containing a number of portraits, including the famous tableau of Pierre Mignard which is to be found in the Brussels Museum, and some interesting documents hitherto unpublished, the character, the talents, the adventures of this extraordinary figure of the seventeenth century are admirably etched. There pass across the stage Cardinal de Richelieu, who has been represented as her lover, and his successor Cardinal Mazarin. We hear King Louis XIV anxiously asking what is the commentary of Ninon on the events or projects of the Court. We meet once more the ugly, deformed Scarron, with his bitter wit. Scarron was the husband of Madame de Maintenon, who subsequently married at midnight, in a little chapel, the Roi Soleil; and Madame de Maintenon was one of the intimate friends of Ninon, though after she became

the morganatic Queen of France the two women met only in secret.

Saint-Evremond, whose intelligence was such that he was known as l'Esprit, had a powerful influence over Ninon's life, and she may be regarded as his disciple. We find Molière composing some of his most satirical passages in her house, and with her assistance. Racine, La Fontaine, Madame de Lafayette, Colbert, Lulli, the greatest musician of the time, were of the company. Tallemant des Réaux, the memorialist, who is a perfect mirror of the epoch, was one of her friends. Voltaire met her when she was already old but wonderfully preserved—he a boy of twelve years. There is perhaps no more signal proof of her discernment than the judgment she formed of the young François-Marie Arouet, whose conversation, precociously clever, she loved. It is a pleasing picture, this encounter of the eighty-year-old Ninon and the youth for whom she predicted the greatest future. She knew instinctively the marks of genius, though Voltaire in later life wrote unkindly of her, and of the maxims of an austere philosophy which he heard from her lips. Her maxims were not always austere, and some of them which have survived have been compared for their concision and profundity to those of La Rochefoucauld. She was, it is true, a *courtisane*. But always it was intel-

lectual friendships which she sought, and she grouped around her the poets, the philosophers, the artists, of her age, and showed that she was in all respects their equal. It was the fashion to write epigrams in verse, and in this pastime she excelled.

M. Emile Magne divides her life into three parts. He paints for us Ninon the Epicure, Nine the Eceptic, and Ninon the Stoic. Her parents were poor, though her father belonged to the *petite noblesse*. There appears to have been a battle royal between the rakish father and the severe mother regarding the education of Ninon. To play upon the lute, to practise the dance, to cultivate the arts, and to sharpen the wits, were feminine occupations which were looked upon askance in certain strata of society. Ninon, disregarding the maternal edict, was a voracious reader; and after her father, engaged in a long, amorous adventure which ended in the killing of de Chabans in fair fight, was compelled to fly from France, she quickly developed a 'temperament' that no exhortations of her mother who had devoted herself to the Church could restrain. Nevertheless when her mother died she retired for a time, filled with remorse, to a convent. When she emerged, solitary, without fortune, it is not surprising that she was thrown from admirer to admirer. Her reputation

suffered, and she accepted willingly the hospitality of Marion de Lorme, around whom Victor Hugo has written one of his plays. Scarron composed poems about them both—Marion and Ninon—but those addressed to Ninon display an unusual deference. Marion exhibited her power by obliging Gaspard de Coligny, a descendant of the admiral who was killed during the massacres of Saint-Bartholomew, to renounce his Protestantism. Ninon was to hold a still more powerful sceptre.

Young as she was, Ninon, to the amazement of Paris, proclaimed her independence of the conventions which then bore heavily upon women. She threw off the servitude of her sex. She was, in modern times, the first conscious feminist—which means masculinist. Men have a thousand liberties which women do not enjoy, she declared; therefore I make myself a man. She decided to behave as she pleased and not as etiquette commanded.

Here is a dainty miniature of her daily promenade: 'Two footmen carried the *chaise* of Ninon. Clad in a robe of white *tabis* woven with roses she fanned herself softly, lulled by the rhythm of the movement. Enclosed in upholstery of yellow-rayed satin she seemed bathed in sunshine. Mirrors reflected her fresh face masked by black lace. Sometimes she drew

aside the curtain of taffetas and responded to the salutations of the gentlemen who recognized as she passed the livery of her footmen and her armorial bearings. Women threw upon her looks of envy or of hatred. The more audacious admirers escorted her, gossipers came to relate stories collected in the antechambers of the Court, in the galleries of the Palace, in the gardens of the Tuileries or of the Arsenal.'

Among this *cortège* was the Marshal de Grammont. Soon afterwards Paris fell a prey to the Fronde, and the streets became tumultuous. There was no security, and once more Ninon, tired of the artificial life of the capital, desired to withdraw into a religious order. She was only prevented from devoting the rest of her life to piety and to meditation by the amorous advances of the Archbishop of Lyons. Disgusted by his misplaced gallantry she returned to Paris, where she made the acquaintance of the Marquis and of Madame de Sévigné. It was at this critical moment that she fell under the spell of Saint-Evremond, whose clarity of thought, acuteness of observation, high culture, and critical sense fascinated her.

She became a sceptic and the essays of Montaigne were her favourite reading. She burned with the zeal of the propagandist, and scattered her apophthegms, daring and scandalous, every-

where. If such a liberation of conscience was permitted to men, it was formally refused to women. She was denounced to the Queen Anne of Austria, who, moved by indignation, sent her a *lettre de cachet* ordering her to retire into a convent. Ninon observed that no particular convent was named, and said to the messenger, 'Since the Queen is so good as to leave me the choice, kindly inform her that I have selected the institution of the Grands Cordeliers.' The *religieux* known as the Grands Cordeliers, though professing to live in extreme humility, were reputed in the seventeenth century to be the most undisciplined and the most debauched of French monks. The effrontery of Ninon had the unexpected effect of putting the Queen in good humour, and Ninon was left in peace.

The circle that formed around her became more and more brilliant, but presently the enmity of the bigots prevailed, and the Queen insisted on her incarceration in the Madelonettes. Her partisans at Court protested, and there was the beginning of a conspiracy to rescue her. She was thereupon transferred to the establishment of the Benedictines of Lagny, where she had more freedom. She was authorized to receive visits, and presently a large number of the courtiers went to Lagny, with the result that the innkeeper of the *Epée Royale* grew rich. One day a strange

person, dressed half in mannish and half in womanish mode—a scarlet tunic and a skirt of grey, a black hat with long plumes hiding the masculine peruke—entered. It was the Queen Christine of Sweden who admired Ninon as she admired all persons in Europe who distinguished themselves by a superior intelligence. The intervention of Christine caused the King to set Ninon free.

Ninon, to avoid giving further offence to the Queen's dames of honour, left the fashionable world and returned to the quarter known as the Marais. Her house in the Rue des Tournelles quickly became famous as the resort of all the intellectuals. There began a sort of collaboration between Molière and Ninon. She gave advice in the writing of 'Tartufe', the deathless satire on bigots. The play, produced in May 1664, during the fêtes of Versailles, aroused the wrath of those against whom it was directed, and for five years Molière had to sustain merciless assaults. It will be remembered that when Molière died he was refused Christian burial.

Boileau was of the company which debated in her house how they could best oppose the Theological Faculty, which threatened to condemn Descartes and his works. Boileau also participated in the composition of a comic interlude in the 'Malade Imaginaire' directed against the

doctors. That evening, on which Ninon and her guests improvised facetious responses which Molière afterwards worked into his play, may properly be regarded as historical.

Her latter years were cheered by the consolations of religion, but never did she lose her power of repartee and her sayings passed from mouth to mouth. No woman received after her death such homage from so many illustrious friends. With the multiplication of anecdotes about her, her true merits, which were those of the intellect, were overclouded, but La Bruyère came near the truth when he said of her, 'A beautiful woman who has the qualities of a cultured man is the most delicious thing in the world. One found in her the best of the two sexes.' But Ninon herself, in a letter, has revealed the secret of her seduction: 'Philosophy should be accompanied by an agreeable wit. It is not enough to be wise, it is necessary to please.'

THE CROSS-ROADS OF THE WORLD

ONCE upon a time the cross-roads of the world were said to be at the Paris Opéra. It was repeated by travellers of all conditions and by the Parisians themselves that the surest way to find anybody whose traces had been lost was to sit on the terrace of the Café de la Paix on the Grands Boulevards. Sooner or later the lost person, if one were patient enough, would go by.

This was a pardonable exaggeration. It truly conveyed the cosmopolitan character of that angle of the Boulevards. Men and women who are accustomed to travel pass in an unceasing procession by the Opéra of Paris. They come from the Balkanic countries; they come from Russia; they come from the Mediterranean lands; they come from Germany and from England; they come from the Near East and from the Far East; they come from America. Here is a veritable centre, a sort of secular Mecca.

The Grands Boulevards of Paris are as

thronged as ever, but since the war a new centre has been formed. The cross-roads of the world are to-day rather at Montparnasse on the southern side of the Seine. Here have I seen an extraordinary number of celebrated writers of the United States; of sociologists and politicians; of painters and sculptors; of professors and students; in short, all those who make their way through Europe in search of instruction or of entertainment, who wish to observe and who wish to encounter each other.

The Boulevard de Montparnasse where it crosses the Boulevard Raspail is, in its present form, of comparatively recent growth. The whole stretch of pavement is a matter of only a thousand yards, yet in those thousand yards a score of languages are spoken. Representatives of every country are to be met, and especially there are to be met members of every school of artistic expression.

There are the most fantastic costumes; there are all degrees of culture. This spot is the rendezvous of intellectuals—some of them true intellectuals, others of them false. There are painters who can paint and painters who cannot paint. There are poets who have done excellent work and others whose poetry is a mere excuse for idleness.

Along this thoroughfare are bookshops galore

and shops which deal in antiquities and shops which sell pigments and easels.

In the hotels which lie on either side—some of them little, some of them big, some of them dingy and some of them palatial—are hosts of foreigners of whom a large proportion are Americans. The character of Montparnasse is unmistakable. It is written on its forehead. Montparnasse is the Greenwich Village or the Chelsea of Paris; but it is much more than Greenwich Village or Chelsea—it is more foreign, more animated, more mixed, more teeming, more eager, more productive.

Some of the cafés have now been turned into picture galleries where one may see the works of artists who have become famous mingled with the strangest compositions of the most advanced and, let it be confessed, incompetent painters.

There is a constant coming and going. Montparnasse is emptied only to be renewed. The Germans are now conspicuous again. The Russians frequent the places where Trotsky darkly schemed. Turks and Armenians and Greeks—one of them used to wear sandals and chlamys—sit side by side. There are Rumanians and Czecho-Slovakians and Cubans and Chinese and Brazilians and Egyptians in higgledy-piggledy confusion. A Hindoo with a huge turban is in company with a lank Pole, a swarthy Spaniard, and a

heavy-jowled Dutchman. Above all, there are fair-haired Swedes and Norwegians. The British and the Americans are conspicuous.

Montparnasse has veritably become the most international spot in the world. It is at once Bohemian and bourgeois; it is at once rich and poor; and although it is new it is at the same time old, for if one looks up its origins one will find that already, in the time of Villon, the *escho-liers* drifted into the wooded fields of Montparnasse through the Latin Quarter. In the thirteenth century Jehan de Meung composed the *Roman de la Rose* in lodgings which were in the Rue Saint-Jacques.

Since then there has been a slow overflowing from the Latin Quarter, where students from many countries assembled in the time of Abélard, sinking their nationalities, German, Italian, Flemish, and Spanish, in the universal desire for learning.

As is perhaps to be expected, there is much that is objectionable, noisy, glaring, absurd, iniquitous, in this cosmopolitan life, but there is also much that is admirable. Montparnasse is a gymnasium of great bracing virtues and of efforts which transcend frontiers, and out of this welter of myriad-sided life something which is altogether good may, if the gods be kind, yet come.

JOSÉPHINE

AN interesting series of little works with the general title of *Leurs Amours* is appearing in France. Marcelle Tinayre relates *La Vie Amoureuse de Madame de Pompadour*; while André Antoine, the celebrated theatrical producer and critic, deals with *La Vie Amoureuse de Francois-Joseph Talma*, the actor. Louis XIV is given a place in this collection, Louis Bertrand being the biographer of his love-affairs. Maurice Rostand compresses in small compass the outstanding incidents in the life of Casanova; and Maurice Donnay promises a book on Alfred de Musset, the supreme poet of sentiment. Charles Maurras will relate the immortal story of Dante.

But to me there is a special fascination in the *Vie Amoureuse* of the Impératrice Joséphine. Her life is sympathetically told by Gérard d'Houville, or, rather, to give the author her real name, by the delicate writer Madame Henri de Régnier.

Everybody knows in outline the history of the beautiful Creole, Joséphine Tascher de la Pagerie. She was born in Martinique in 1763. In 1779 she was married to the Vicomte de Beauharnais,

who died, a victim of the Revolution, on the scaffold in 1794. Two years later she was wedded to General Bonaparte. Her husband became the Emperor Napoleon, and she became the Empress Joséphine. This was in 1804. Five years afterwards, Napoleon, for reasons of State, put aside his wife, who had given him no heirs, and espoused Marie-Louise of Austria. She only survived the tragedy—for tragedy it was—for a few years, dying at Malmaison in 1814, the year which marked the beginning of Napoleon's downfall.

The choice of Gérard d'Houville for the task of telling the oft-told tale of Joséphine was inevitable. She is herself of Creole origin. Her writings are to be counted among the freshest, the most subtle, the most vivid paintings of love. She does everything with an exquisite taste. She is fantastic and capricious: there is an epicurean flavour in her work. In an age of realism she remains romantic, and seeks to show the beauty of the universe. She never forces the note—there are no cries and imprecations, no crashing catastrophes, but there are warm tears and silvery laughter. She is the daughter of the poet José-Maria de Hérédia.

Here is a poem in prose. Bernard Shaw has recently confessed that before writing his *Saint Joan* he spent only twelve hours in looking up the

records. Gérard d'Houville too disdains the archives. She is not what the French call a *rat de bibliothèque*. One can easily discover anachronisms if one sets out on so foolish a search. Always does she take the side of Ye-Yette, as the charming Martiniquaise, who afterwards became *plus que reine*, was called. Her first husband is represented as continually in the wrong. Joséphine was always in the right. Nor is it to be expected that Gérard d'Houville would acknowledge for a moment that the little Puss in Boots—Napoleon—had any legitimate grounds for jealousy.

In short, Joséphine becomes, in the delicious portrait of Gérard d'Houville, an altogether delightful creature. Nobody should read this little life who wants historical or even psychological truths, but anybody who can appreciate a beautiful pastel, a daintily coloured vignette, will be charmed with the marvellous adventures of the Creole. They make a pleasing fable, one of the most exquisite fables of all time. The very chapter headings will show in what spirit the author approaches her subject: 'Joséphine Poétique'; 'Joséphine en Fleurs'; 'Joséphine en Pleurs.' Joséphine is a seductive person, undulating and silky, and brightly-coloured, with the plumage of the humming-bird; while Napoleon is an eagle. Eagle and humming-bird!

'I compare her to Eve,' says Madame d'Houville—'but to Eve after her fall, spending a great deal of money for her fig-leaves. Joséphine was the most coquettish, the most elegant, and the most pompous of Impératrices. Yes, she was essentially feminine, with every feminine grace, but with every feminine fault, and it was impossible that the eagle and the humming-bird could keep each other company for long.' Madame d'Houville does not deny her frivolity, but she writes the apologia of frivolity, calling it feminine wisdom, perfumed and lovable. Alas! that it should all be vanity of vanities. 'Women know this but they deck themselves with frivolity. The veil of lace serves as a shroud for many joys. The face paint, already funereal, hints of the embalmer. Their powder is sister of their ashes. Between nothingness and life they, these women deserving of our pity, spread diaphanous tissues, fragile and yet more durable than themselves, and instead of meditating before a death's head they dream of hats, *coiffures*, and gay plumage.'

Much is made of Joséphine's love of flowers. Her life was filled with flowers, even when towards the end at Malmaison it was filled with tears. The *fleurs* sweetened the *pleurs*, and the *pleurs* gave a fresh fragrance to the *fleurs*. There is an odour of roses in these pages. Malmaison

is famous for its roses, and among them Joséphine's petals dropped. The Impératrice of Roses, the Impératrice of Flowers, such is Joséphine, who, in her youth, bore the name of Rose; and it is thus that she appears to us, the Goddess of Gardens, the protectrice of all that grows green, when we go to Malmaison to salute her shade and to resurrect her souvenir; for whatever is to be pardoned in Joséphine, is to be pardoned because she loved flowers. 'A woman who knows not how to suffer does not lean with such love over these silent consolations. She loved flowers, not in passing, not in negligent exclamations: How sweetly they smell! How pretty they are! but as a dear vegetal family committed to her care. Surrounding herself with them she had, in the profound recesses of her soul, a thousand perfumes, a thousand corolla which never open in the real world; she possessed an internal landscape, kept jealously mysterious, a paradise of colours, of shade, and of aroma, in which the pollen of sentiments which were not revealed provoked the secret blossoming of an ever-vernal heart.'

The imagery is overdone, but if Madame Gérard d'Houville, despite her sympathy with the unfortunate Joséphine, is not convincing, she is seductive.

A HOUSE WHICH TURNS TOWARD THE SUN

WHEN Christian sought repose and refreshment in the very stately palace, standing hard by the highway, the name of which was Beautiful, they laid the Pilgrim in a large upper chamber, whose window opened toward the sun-rising: the name of the chamber was Peace; where he slept till break of day, and then he awoke and sang.

Have we not all longed for a chamber whose window should open toward the sun-rising? Nay, have we not longed for a habitation that should be turned always toward the sun? Such a house, I now read, has been designed by two Parisian architects, Georges Lécuyer and Henri Jubault. It is called the Villa Tournesol. The villa revolves on a platform and can be oriented at the will of the occupant. The complete model, perfect in every detail, has been exhibited at the Exposition de l'Habitation et des Arts Décoratifs.

The Villa Tournesol is a comfortable and spacious abode. It reposes on a mobile platform of

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metal and concrete. This platform is imitated from the turn-tables used in railway stations, though the weight of the construction is superior to that of a locomotive. It has eight large beams placed starwise on a central pivot. At the end of each beam is an iron wheel inserted into a circular rail.

Needless to say the foundations of reinforced concrete are extremely solid and are built on a special plan. The mechanism of gyration is simple enough and is worked by an electric motor. In the interior of the house a button may be pressed and the structure will turn slowly and can be stopped instantly. With a motor of four horse-power it is calculated that the complete circuit can be made in an hour. This is regarded as rapid enough, and, generally speaking, the house may be turned toward the sun in a few minutes, and even when the edifice is in motion it may be entered without athletic agility.

Perhaps an extraordinary ingenuity has been required to carry out the scheme, and yet a revolving house strikes one as almost revolutionary. The architecture is sober. The polygonal form has been preferred because it is less monotonous than the round form. The eight sides of the house give it a pleasing appearance and they have been made as decorative as possible. M. Lucien Boudot, who is known for his originality of style

and his unquestionable taste, has been called in to make the design harmonious and truly artistic, and he has made valuable suggestions for the internal arrangements.

The rooms of a house are generally more or less rectangular in shape, but in the Villa Tournesol they are naturally V-shaped. At first sight it would seem to be difficult to compose a V-shaped room agreeable to the eye. But the difficulty has been overcome by a dexterous arrangement of various projections. Quaint cupboards have been placed here and there. Sections have been cut off to serve as pantries and other offices. Furniture has been disposed in such manner as to break up the lines—furniture especially adapted to the character of the room. As a rule clear colours have been preferred which will enhance the effect of sunlight, but although black is banished, startling colours are also banished. Thus a bedroom is in mahogany with silver chairs and mauve hangings. This combination is ideal for a room in which the rising sun will enter. In the studio almond green and old Utrecht yellow are adopted. Even such details as the covers of the books—which are in yellow—have been carefully considered.

An internal court has walls of Wedgwood blue and is paved with white and blue marble. The bath-room is in tones of peach pink. Everything

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in the house is designed in conformity with the notion that it may be turned toward the sun.

Bordering the revolving platform is a terrace with a balustrade. On the roof is a terrace with a pergola, and in the centre a glass-covered dome.

It may properly be asked what price is required for such a house. The model that is shown with its large vestibule, its bureau, its *salon*, its dining-room, its big kitchen and offices, its two bedrooms, its bath-room, its closets, its cabinets, its roomy cupboards, its central court, its roof terrace, and its external terrace, is estimated at 1,250,000 francs, or £10,000. This includes decorations and furnishings of the most sumptuous kind. The mechanism, however, only represents 20,000 francs, or £1,600.

For persons of limited means it should be instantly added that the authors of the project declare that it is possible to build smaller and less luxurious villas which will turn on a pivot at much less cost. All kinds of economies can be effected on the ornamentation and furnishings, and, in short, a house that turns toward the sun at the pleasure of the occupant can be had for a most reasonable figure.

After the first surprise caused by the idea of a turning house, one quickly becomes accustomed to such a realization, and is even astonished that it should have been thought of so late; for, by

its form and its rotative movement, the house, as a French writer remarks, is in perfect harmony with the form and the movement of the universe.

There is something peculiarly poetic and attractive in the project. One is tempted by the cult of Zoroaster. On an Egyptian temple an ancient architect has inscribed that the sun makes possible all that is. The beneficent action of sunlight is affirmed in our modern medical, social, poetical, and religious creeds, and we instinctively echo the dying cry of Goethe, 'More light! More light!' Surely this combination of up-to-date mechanism, architectural skill, and artistic taste will before long be accessible to us in France, in England, in America, and many people will avail themselves of the new possibility of living perpetually in the sunlight.

LECONTE DE LISLE

THE centenary of the birth of the great French poet Leconte de Lisle would assuredly not have passed without celebration in normal times. Even if it had occurred during the more stagnant days of war it would have been observed by his admirers, who include all whose taste in literature is for what may well be called an emancipated classicism. It fell in the final phase of the conflict, it came at the critical moment when the whole world held its breath at the approach of peace, when hardly a faithful few were minded to render homage to one of the makers of the modern renaissance of French poetry.

I am not merely expressing a personal opinion but that of most competent French critics in declaring that for two hundred years the art of writing in verse was dead in France. With the exception of the work of a few men whose genius nothing could stifle, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were practically barren. The poets were in shackles. Even Voltaire found himself reduced to impotence by the rigid rules which Boileau finally fastened on French poetry. To appreciate the merit of Leconte de Lisle it is necessary to put him in his historical place.

One of the artificial regulations which interfered with the freedom of poetry in the reign of the Roi Soleil was that which ordained that there should be no enjambment; that is to say, the sense should march in time and step with the sound. No line was allowed to carry on into the next line. There was produced a species of verse deadly in its monotony. Every ten or twelve syllables had precisely the same rhythm as every other ten or twelve syllables, coming regularly to this full halt of sound and sense. English literature passed through the same unhappy experience. Even men of a naturally delicate ear submitted—such is the fear of authority—to the dreadful dullness of this see-saw style without variety. There was also a dividing of words into sheep on the right hand and goats on the left hand. Such-and-such expressions were proper in poetry; such-and-such were low and vulgar. The very rhymes were ordained. The selection was limited to conventional couples such as *jour* and *amour* chose in some mysterious manner and imposed upon writers by the fatal law of mediocrity. Inversions peculiar to verse were not merely tolerated, but in some measure were obligatory. Under this awful curse French poetry languished for long.

It was the son of a Grecian woman, André Chénier, to whom the credit of the first attempt

to throw off these chains really belongs. It is probably an exaggeration to say that it was for this crime he was beheaded. Certain it is that the ardent poet who perished in the chaos of the Revolution deserves the gratitude of these glorious singers who have succeeded him. He inspired himself from the real classic springs, not from the pseudo-classicism of the jog-trotting rhymsters. He retained many faults. One has not to search far to find adjectives added for the sake of rhyming with other adjectives, to discover clumsy and hackneyed periphrases; but, as de Banville admirably observes, 'With him the music of verse reawakened, firm, undulating, and sonorous.' It was reserved to the most stupendous and diversified poet of the nineteenth century, the godlike Victor Hugo, to sweep away these miserable mechanical impediments. Henceforth French poetry was free to fly at its fancy. He drew on the whole dictionary for his vocabulary; he placed new and striking words at the end of his verses, and as rhyme is the basic principle of French poetry the result was surprising after the impoverished productions of wooden limitation and imitation: the sense of the sound rushed impetuously from line to line, overflowing, living, filled with the colours of the sky. After him there remained other barriers to remove; but it was undoubtedly the mighty torrent of his genius

that irresistibly broke down the banks which had imprisoned poetry in a narrow bed.

And it is here in the tables of French poetry that Leconte de Lisle finds his place. He was the junior of Victor Hugo—separated from him by a few years only—and while the Master wrote with a lyrical passion, the younger man was more restrained. They must be, each in his way, regarded as life-givers. There is much that is superficially alike in their subjects. Hugo's great work in poetry is *La Légende des Siècles*; that immense pageant of all the generations. Leconte de Lisle's *Poèmes Barbares* constitute a pageant more restricted in period. Often in reading Hugo I have exclaimed: 'What a theme for Leconte de Lisle!' and in reading Leconte de Lisle: 'What Hugo would have done with this story!'

Sometimes they choose similar episodes; but while Hugo, with glowing brush, paints a picture, Leconte de Lisle chisels a rich bas-relief. His is the marmoreal line. If he has not the vivacity of his rival he has a solid force. He is not sparkling, but he packs his words closer. He is not fluent, but he strives for verbal perfection.

They have one merit in common: they place themselves inside, not outside, their subject. In those poems relating to an earlier epoch they do not content themselves with the commonplace

descriptions of their predecessors; they regard the vanished world, not like men of the nineteenth century, with a stock of ready-made epithets, but like men of the veritable age, living in that world; they attain a vivid truth and vitality that amaze. Take such lines as these in Qaïn:

Les ânes de Khamos, les vaches aux mamelles
Pesantes, les boucs noirs, les taureaux vagabonds
Se hâtaient, sous l'épieu, par files et par bonds:
Et les grands chiens mordaient le jarret des chamelles;
Et les portes criaient en tournant sur leurs gonds.

Impossible not to observe in these five lines the emancipation of French poetry of which I have spoken. There is a freshness of phrase, a directness of vision, that belong to the old neglected French poets, to Homer, to the Bible. Here are no clichés, no periphrases. As for the mechanics, the enjambment of the first and second lines, and again of the second and third lines, is obvious. One moves in haste with the hasting procession. The rhymes are unhackneyed and yet seem inevitable. They are vigorous key-words in sound and sense. The harmony of the phrases is varied and splendid. Let me put this animated scene in simple English prose:

The asses of Khamos, the cows with their heavy dugs, the black he-goats, the roving bulls, hastened, under the goad, leaping in lines; and the big dogs bit the hocks of the camels; and the doors creaked in turning on their hinges.

The whole poem of Qaïn from which I have chosen this characteristic extract is written in this direct maner. The Hebrew spectacle is observed with the eyes of the Hebrew prophet. Théodore de Banville, an original and thoughtful critic as well as poet, considered the poem the 'most perfect model of what the epic style can produce to-day'. He does not hesitate to rank it among the epics (so far as any poem can be an epic that is not the spontaneous production of a people) in spite of its brevity. Leconte de Lisle here attempts—as he does in all these 'barbaric' poems—to capture and express the primitive beauty of primitive things; he brings before us the *naïveté*, the virility, the grace, the grandeur, of the primordial world, not by regarding objects from the standpoint of civilization, but by moving in imagination in the midst of the things and peoples, by possessing and being possessed by their actual sentiments. This is the essential demand of the epic. The poet permits no touch that is not true to the spirit of his poem. He is blind to all but the asses, the bulls, the he-goats the biting dogs and the hurrying camels, the goads and the groaning gates. No speculation, no ingenious metaphor, no straying fancy, no weaving of superfluous words, no foreign matter of any sort, however excellent, may intrude. Leconte de Lisle looks on, impassible.

SHOULD THE ACTOR ACT?

SHOULD the actor act? One may well lift startled eyebrows at the question; yet it is the subject of recurrent discussions. Once more in a great English newspaper letters have appeared in which it is asserted that the business of an actor is not to act a part but to become a personage. Distinguished critics, well-known psychologists, and more ordinary theatre-goers have solemnly expressed their views, and sometimes in learned language have explained how personality can be multiple. One might be led to suppose that actors do not act but fall into some sort of hypnotic trance.

The theatre, according to them, becomes a spiritualistic seance, and what we really witness is a ghostly character materializing itself in the body of the actor. The actor, in short, is only a medium. He is, as I believe the spiritualists say, a 'sensitive'. He has no art, any more than a piano, which is a dead instrument, has art. Simply does he permit himself to be played upon by a personage whom we had foolishly thought to be unreal, imaginary; but who is, on the

contrary, a veritable creation of the dramatist's brain.

Pirandello, one of Europe's greatest writers for the stage, has impressed us immensely by his attempts to present on the boards not fanciful and fictitious but living personages. According to his ingenious conception, the author who has described a character has thereby given him a real and separate existence. This character does not pass through the seven ages of man. He emerges fully fashioned. The Greeks depicted Pallas-Athena springing from the head of Zeus, with a mighty war-shout, in complete armour. In the modern mythology of the theatre the dramatic author becomes Jupiter: that is the true name of Mr. Bernard Shaw, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, and M. Henry Bernstein. But their Minervas are disembodied creatures who can only present themselves to our vision by taking possession of the corporeal frame of our tenantless actors.

My acquaintance with actors, English and French, persuades me that they will be shocked at the notion that they are nothing more than empty shells, material masks. They will certainly repudiate the suggestion that their rôle consists in delivering themselves up to intangible persons, who presumably slumber somewhere in the wings, or fly dolefully over the auditorium, when the actor goes home. . . . The job of the actor is not

so easy. He has to learn his business. He does not foolishly pretend to inspiration. He develops his memory and learns how to use his voice. He studies his gestures. He rehearses effects of physiognomy. He is, in a word, a deliberate artist.

Talma was the most famous actor of the nineteenth century, the favourite tragedian of Napoleon, who caused him to play at Erfurt before a row of kings. Talma declined to indulge in barnstorming. He tried to be natural and not declamatory. Never did he become a victim of the emotion which he strove to create in his audience. To throw himself into transports of passion would have been contrary to his idea of his conscious art. All the disciples of Talma were taught that the most elementary principle of acting was to remain master of themselves and not to submit to the sentiments which they simulated. They were to produce an illusion, and how could they produce an illusion if they were truly perturbed?

Any actor who identified himself with his part would become unintelligible. But no actor does, in spite of testimony to the contrary. Otherwise Othello would strangle Desdemona every night, and Desdemona would be unable to respond to the curtain call. The naïve spectator in the gallery would be justified in his hissing of the

villain, and would be an accessory to villainy if he did not rush to the rescue. One cannot experience emotions daily without one's character being influenced; yet nobody refuses to shake hands with an actor who has forged and embezzled and hated and murdered for a thousand nights. Nobody supposes that the stage hero who struts his little hour must necessarily be a noble fellow. The stage lover would never be able to kiss his beloved—unless she happened to be his wife—without the husband bounding furiously on the boards, dog-whip in hand.

Constant Coquelin, perhaps the best actor of our time, vigorously sustained the teaching of Talma. He has in *L'Art du Comédien* emphatically asserted that virtuosity, technical skill, an appearance of sincerity, have nothing to do with organic disturbances. Sarah Bernhardt records that she has seen him asleep on the stage behind the *figurants* for two or three minutes during which he had nothing to say. Thus he recovered from the fatigue of his efforts, and when a young actor named Chabert, to whom he was attached, wakened him, as it was his duty to do, Coquelin, refreshed, sprang to action.

It is true that Sarah Bernhardt herself grandiloquently wrote that the actor must weep and suffer and die, and declared that after a tragic scene she was always completely exhausted. Yet she surely

exaggerated. Physically exhausted she may have been, for she was never robust; but she has herself testified to the necessity of preserving *sang froid* on the stage, in order not to forget the rôle or the *mise en scène*. Her own art was too complex, too intelligent, too dependent upon her entire possession of her means for us to take this statement seriously; and in another part of her interesting manual she contradictorily insists on the need for self-possession.

MAUPASSANT'S MADNESS

WHAT a strange fate was that of Guy de Maupassant, whose monument has just been unveiled by a French minister who talked the conventional nonsense about the French writer of short stories! I am not old enough to have known de Maupassant, but often have I listened to the account of his latter days related by his friends. A clerk in an official department, he sprang to fame by the publication of the bitterly amusing *Boule de Suif*. He was received among the recognized writers of the day, the Zolas, the Flauberts, as their peer. His popularity with the ordinary reader was such that he could live a life of ease. It is true that he was frowned upon by the authorities and prosecutions were launched against him. But these small annoyances were not to be taken seriously.

Maupassant, it seemed, was beloved by the gods. He had everything man could desire: talent, riches, fame, health, and an apparently robust temperament, gay, enterprising, a veritable Don Juan. And then suddenly he was found

with his throat cut. His clear intelligence was overclouded. He was locked up in an asylum. Never did he recover his reason. The end was inevitable, and at the age of forty-three he died.

I have never been able to understand why it should be thought necessary to draw a veil over such tragedies as these. Anybody who has read the short stories of de Maupassant can hardly have failed to discover his constant and morbid preoccupation with sex. It was for him an obsession, and one does not need the confidences of his friends to realize that his sensuality was abnormal. With rare exceptions his stories are the relation of the eternal *chasse à la femme*. He preserves in the majority of them a good humour. He is like a sportsman who in the evening recounts his exploits. In the smoking-room he tells his experiences, a mighty Nimrod whose partridges are women. They are carefully written, these tales, though in my opinion with excessive sharpness of line. Everything is well arranged; the most is made of the anecdote, which is often trivial; but they lack that quality which alone can make a story truly great—they have no spiritual meaning, they are not parables.

Even in the earlier and more humorous anecdotes there is an unpleasant strain. One is asked to laugh at the most cruel farces. There is a lurking suspicion of madness. Some of the best

stories are spoiled by long disquisitions in which the author retails his philosophy of life—and a terrible philosophy it is! It has become the fashion, which was naturally followed by the French minister in his discourse, to assert that de Maupassant was purely objective, did not permit himself to preach. Nothing is more amazing than these literary labels which are stuck on without regard to the truth. Once they are stuck, a legend which is usually erroneous is created.

I recommend those who believe that de Maupassant is only concerned with the telling of a tale, is purely objective, to re-read, for example, *L'Inutile Beauté*. It is Maupassant at his best, but in the middle of it he deliberately introduces two personages who have nothing to do with the story, for the mere purpose of expressing their opinions on the imbecility of the universe and the tragedy of those who by their intellect have become aware of the gross animality and meaninglessness of Nature. On this theme he perpetually harps.

But I suppose it is too late to endeavour to destroy the accepted thesis that de Maupassant is dispassionate. Doubtless the preface to *Pierre et Jean*, in which he tries to lay down his literary doctrine, is responsible for this curious misconception. For my part, I am convinced that however

much the writer may try to keep himself out of his books, in reality he puts himself, and nothing but himself, into his books. For that matter, de Maupassant admits as much; the difference between the various schools is chiefly the kind of mask which the writer assumes.

Nevertheless, Maupassant aimed at realism, and even when he depicted the most monstrous persons, tormented by vile desires, he could doubtless justify his characters by pointing to the life about him. But mainly he would have to point to the life within himself. Those who declare that with the exception of *Le Horla* there are no signs of insanity in the works of de Maupassant have surely forgotten *Fou*, *Qui Sait?* *Le Saut du Berger*, and a dozen others which unmistakably betray his incipient lunacy.

As for his longer works, *Une Vie*, *Bel-Ami*, *Fort Comme la Mort*, *Notre Cœur*, they are of unexampled sadness. One feels as though one were in a low-ceilinged room to which no air can penetrate. One is suffocated with sadness; one wants to break the windows and escape. Zola is also pessimistic, but there is a wonderful bustle, an unceasing movement, in his books, which relieve the tension. Alphonse Daudet is melancholy enough, but the sun of Provence enlightens his work. Anatole France pricks many illusions, but he does not prick the illusion of beauty.

Pierre Loti, with all his brooding, is picturesque and exotic. Mirbeau, though bitter, is fighting against social hypocrisies. Even Flaubert, as Maurice de Waleffe remarks, is saved by his ardent and universal curiosity. But Maupassant is consistently discouraging; and darkness descends upon him with the slow inevitability of those iron roofs which crushed the unhappy prisoners of a barbarous age.

BY RUNNING BROOKS

WHEN the sea swayed mournfully under a colourless sky, in a forgotten corner of La Manche—the horizon a dull confusion of watery cloud and cloudy water—I left it to the monotonous companionship of the crying gulls. It had no charm in those gloomy days of the dying year. Gone the flash and the sparkle, and the rebellious grandeur of winter storms had not yet come. Everything was sad and saddening. I turned my steps inland, with sympathetic melancholy away from the wearisome washing of the waves on the cold shingles. And, behold! I had not taken more than a few hundred steps when I heard the happy tinkle of a little brook, merrily trickling, joyfully dancing, mocking the sunless heavens with its light-hearted chattering—a singing, running, bright little stream, as pleasant as a playful child, as gay as a frolicsome kitten, creatures that are not strung in nervous accord with the weather.

In the misty Highlands of Scotland, with thousands of tiny leaping rills, in the placid downs of Sussex where the rivulets are less lively, in

nearly every part of the well-irrigated land of France, I have observed, always with new surprise, this enfranchisement of the smaller rivers from depressing atmospheric influences. The whole earth and sky and sea, with all that in them is, can weep and sulk and fill the imagination with persistent pain; but the brook, so long as it can find water wherewith to move freely along its shallow bed, is perennially content, bubbling and babbling, frisking and turning, the very type of innocent mirth, a thing that looks neither before nor backward, that has never been known to pine for what is not, that is emancipated from cares and moods and all that make man and the universe fretful and feverish and dark.

That is why I think the women of France are so cheerful. I do not mean the Parisiennes, those who remain languid in the *salon*, or those who are hidden in the coiling clouds of steaming washrooms; but I mean all those who go down to the *lavoirs* of the running brooks and who beat their linen in the open air. Something of the laughing soul of the water enters into their souls; and as they wring their white sheets on the banks they wring out of their hearts all unhealthy feelings and are assoiled of all soiling griefs.

By a tiny basin, where the stream ran into an elbow, that dropped down steeply in a series of steps, the women of the village were kneeling and

holding their garments against the heady current which bent them backwards, tugging with a child's force, roguishly attempting to wrest them from the women's hands. It was as if a crowd of sprightly naiads were mischievously snatching in their fun at the clothing, teasing, tricksome, at their morning revels. But if they chuckled—such a silvery chuckle!—the women chuckled too; and the sound on that sombre December day was as sweet as any sound of summer.

The landscape, which had seemed so drear, brightened up at the noise that these French women and this French stream made. Picture the scene if you please: a scene frankly French. There were about us irregular rows of quaint gnarled apple-trees, stunted and twisted, with boughs on which grew big balls of mistletoe. The low hill in front was entangled with brown and black and dead undergrowth, but on the top stood a cluster of tall trees with their bare arms spread out on a naked sky. The stream at the foot seemed to issue from nowhere. Suddenly it appeared just by the broken wall and the ruined arch, picturesque relics of some construction such as make one think that in the French country-side no stone has been laid, no hand has been lifted to save a building from decay, since the days of Napoleon. Where it flowed into the deeper hollow, and then tumbled again, like an infant

amused at its own falls, a number of simple planks had been placed on the wet ground, and a ramshackle breakwater, which did not dam the water in the least, stretched from bank to bank. The women, with their petticoats tucked up, carelessly showing shapely legs ending in great *sabots*, knelt and splashed their towels and their shirts, gossiping as they worked, if one could call this matutinal recreation work.

'*Bonjour, mes belles,*' I called out cheerily.

Three faces turned smilingly towards me.

'*Bonjour, monsieur,*' cried one of the *lavan-dières*. '*Qu'il fait beau, ce matin!*'

When does it not *fait beau* for those who can thus perform their tasks in company, in God's great out-of-doors with the ripple of running brooks in their ears?

I understand why the French call running water *eau vive*—live water. Is it not indeed alive? Is it not full of the spirit of life? I understand why the French call these streams *rigoles* and why to *rigoler* is to amuse oneself vastly. What amusement is so fresh, so constant, so naïve, so spontaneous as the amusement of a *rigole*? Who is so sorry a churl that he cannot *rigoler* by a *rigole*? Why, all the world, seen from the banks of a *lavoir*, is *rigolo*. All its struggles and its problems, all its solemn affairs, all its pomps and its glories, all its hustlings and its ambitions, all

its disappointments, its triumphs, its feasts, all its philosophies and its arts, all its marriages and its births, its deaths that no man can number, its multitudinous sorrows, are from the angle of the little laughing stream, the little heedless, capering, vivacious, a-moral stream, all are not worth a single heartache, all are *rigolo*.

And as I listened to this tuneful lesson, and watched the women, their sleeves rolled up to their shoulders, rejoicing as they dipped their arms in the water, and vigorously scrubbed their *linge* on the boards, and dipped their arms again, there came into my mind that not only I had been put in high heart by the sight of a band of French *lavandières*, I remembered that Stevenson, coming out of Compiègne on a cold misty morning, was made glad by a crowd of happy *laveuses*, in a floating *lavoir* on the Oise, who left their washing to watch him pass in his little craft, and accompanied him with their cordial acclamations until he went out of sight beyond the bridge.

Is there anyone who would not be inspired by such a spectacle? Yes, there is one person. She came into my view at that moment, an angular painter with a sour visage. She carried a small easel and a folding stool. With an air of authority she planted them firmly between me and the women. She produced the tools of her trade,

and although I could have wished that another had undertaken to reproduce that charming scene, to put on canvas that which could not be put on canvas, the glow of these faces, the jollity of the trilling stream, the quintessence of that *rigolade*, I did not doubt that such at least was her design. She was not *sympathique*. She would never capture even the exterior manifestation of the spirit of the group. But it pleased me to think that no one, not even an unfriendly and frowning artist, could fail to recognize the poetic possibilities of the composition.

I was deceived. She sat down, she looked over the heads of my *belles*, beyond the tripping rivulet; she scowled; she stood up; she stepped backwards; she stepped forwards; she sat down again; she got up once more; and then she shouted to the *lavandières*:

‘Hello! You are in the way.’

The women looked at her, astonished but respectful.

‘What is it that Madame wishes?’ asked one of them—the one who told me that *il fait beau*.

‘*Voyons, voyons,*’ replied Madame. ‘You spoil the view. You interfere with my art. If you will come a little lower down, and let me take your place, *tout s’arrangera.*’

They hesitated. ‘*Allons,*’ cried the most loquacious of the trio. ‘We shall be just as well down

there. 'These planks are not worth while.' And they rose, gathered up their washing, and left the place for Madame, who, without thanking them, took up her new post, where she proceeded to paint the tumble-down wall and the remains of the arch.

For a moment I thought the stream had ceased to chirrup; but as I stood and listened I heard again its tinkle, and I heard again the tinkling laughter of the *lavandières*, and once more all was *rigolo*.

THE FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

‘**I**T is impossible to exaggerate the immense influence for good or for evil that foreign correspondents may exercise.’ Thus spoke M. Bokanowski, the distinguished French Commerce Minister. He is in a position to judge of the effect of unconsidered statements on the relations of France with other countries.

Those relations are generally excellent, and are indeed fostered by conscientious newspaper writers who are animated by goodwill. But occasionally they are unnecessarily disturbed and submitted to rude tests by injudicious messages. It was so when false reports of a purely imaginary French hostility to American fliers were circulated a few days before the enthusiastic reception of Lindbergh totally disproved them.

Every foreign correspondent could recall dozens of examples of cables which have given an unwarranted impression and have helped to work up ill-feeling between peoples. It is, of course, not always the correspondent who is responsible. When Bismarck ‘adapted’ the famous Ems mes-

sage he made war between France and Prussia certain. Diplomats and politicians are not invariably wise in the manner in which they 'release' news.

Yet undoubtedly the newspapers, and therefore newspaper men, are now playing a far greater part than they have ever played before in determining events. The rise of the Press as a popular organ and the use that can be made of it in public affairs, national and international, have been realized only recently. In respect of international matters the power of the Press has grown immeasurably. It may have a moderating or a mischievous influence. But hitherto no serious attempt has been made to work out the implications of this new factor in the foreign domain—a factor that may decide the issues of war and peace. Censorship or control of any sort is repugnant; yet, on the other hand, it seems equally impossible to allow irresponsible writers to act, foolishly or maliciously, as incendiaries of the world.

There are all kinds of problems which present themselves—problems of recruitment, of training, of character, as well as of knowledge and talent. There are problems of policy and technical problems of how to interest readers at least as much in constructive and interpretative 'stories' which will show a nation in its best light, as in insig-

nificant and scandalous and highly coloured incidents which misrepresent a nation.

'Correspondents may,' said M. Bokanowski, 'watch with spiteful or grumpy attention the tiny episodes of the life of the country of which they are the guests, collect carefully and cultivate all the germs of misunderstanding and difficulties, defend the exclusively national viewpoint in any dispute. When foreign correspondents thus employ the powerful weapons that modern journalism puts at their disposal they are—one must not hesitate to declare—centres of fermentation, of incomprehension, and of international discord. They keep the peoples apart, rendering them more than ever strangers to each other.'

That is the dark picture painted by M. Bokanowski, and everybody who has seen the workings of the Press abroad must acknowledge that there really are such mischief-making persons who see always the unpleasant side of a nation. This kind of chronicler may give the impression that little happens in France, for example, but *crimes passionnels*; while America is a land of railway accidents, bandits, and bootleggers. Or, if his inclinations are political, he can prove that France is militarist, or that the United States is imperialist; these things are so easy to demonstrate if one lays stress only on a few facts.

But there is another conception of the duties

of a correspondent abroad. He may properly look upon himself as an unofficial ambassador. He may, while remaining modest about his personal position, see clearly that some word he writes may be the spark that will begin a great fire. He may himself try to understand, not superficially but profoundly, the people among whom he finds himself; for it is only if he truly understands that he can help others to understand. He may send precisely what is meaningful, what is of some permanent value, what may contribute to mutual regard.

The foreign correspondent should be, on behalf of his compatriots, an attentive interpreter of the thoughts, the sentiments, the difficulties, the doubts, of the *milieu* in which he lives. He should endeavour, without being discouraged—and begin over and over again—to carry out the delicate task of explaining and correlating the mentalities, the forms of expression, the methods of work, of two countries. It is his business to discover, and therefore reduce, the causes of *malentendus*, and to cultivate and therefore render more vivacious and powerful the causes of *rapprochement*. He should be between two civilizations a living bridge. He should by his functions prepare the interpenetration of peoples—the collaboration of wills and the union of hearts.

That is a fairly good definition endorsed by M. Bokanowski of the foreign correspondent who takes his duties seriously. And what is wanted is the foreign correspondent who takes his duties seriously, and is not merely earning a living, not merely making a 'splash', not merely amusing the groundlings; the foreign correspondent who tries to live up to the judgment of Balzac: 'The journalist is the true priest of the modern world.'

FACT AND FICTION

HOW far is the writer justified in mixing recognizable facts with fiction; in painting portraits, which can hardly be mistaken, of living persons, and dexterously adding some embellishing trait, or some unpleasant characteristic, of his own invention?

The question is raised by the publication in France of a novel entitled *Bella* in which the critics have discovered representations of Raymond Poincaré and Philippe Berthelot. Its author is Jean Giraudoux, one of the most alert of the younger French writers. He juggles with ideas and performs acrobatic feats with words. Like several of the foremost French authors he is also a diplomatist. In pursuance of his diplomatic career he has come into close contact with two men who are, each in his own way, more responsible for recent French history than anyone else. Naturally he has formed personal opinions about them. Perhaps he would deny that he has painted their portraits, but it is difficult, even for the man in the street, to fail to distinguish the originals. He has made them play parts which reveal his

sympathies and antipathies. He has given to one of them the beau rôle and to the other he has attributed actions of which his sitter would surely be incapable in real life.

Is he within his rights in taking such liberties? If he had chosen to produce a political pamphlet with the real names attached and with only facts admitted nobody could object. A much more doubtful proceeding is that of giving his figures false names and of calling upon his imagination for additional facts, favourable or unfavourable. In this way 'villains' and 'heroes' are manufactured unfairly.

Philippe Berthelot, who is the permanent director of the French Foreign Office, is not as well known as Raymond Poincaré, yet his influence has been remarkable. He has served under ten Foreign Ministers and has often inspired foreign policy. His memory is extraordinary. At a moment's notice he could inform you precisely what treaties regulate the relations of any two countries, and there is no subject of modern diplomacy on which his knowledge is not complete. Those of us who saw him at work during the peacemaking are aware of his qualities—though of course he must not be held responsible for all the decisions which were taken by the statesmen.

Here is a page of *Bella* in which he is described:

'René Dubardeau, my father, had another child besides me—Europe. She was formerly my elder, but since the war has become my younger sister. Instead of speaking of her as a daughter of age and experience, fairly settled, he pronounced her name with more tenderness, but also with more inquietude—a daughter still to be married, and about whom my advice as a young man might not be without utility. My father was, if one excepts Wilson, the only plenipotentiary who would have refashioned Europe with generosity, and the only one, without exception, who could have done so with competence. He believed in treaties, in their virtue and in their force. The nephew of a synthetical chemist, he believed it possible, in the heat produced by the war, to create new States. Westphalia had produced Switzerland, and Vienna had produced Belgium—States which owed to the artificiality of their birth their natural love of neutrality and of peace. Versailles had the duty of giving birth to new nations. My father aided Wilson in that task. . . . In his youth, in order to win his livelihood as a student, my father had written notices for the Grande Encyclopédie on peoples which had been enslaved or had disappeared. In the Congress he set himself to repair injustices which were a thousand years old.'

Bella is a relative of the French minister,

Rebendart, and the story, such as it is, concerns Bella and the son of Dubardeau. The two families are at daggers drawn, and therefore we have, in a modern setting, a repetition of the drama of Romeo and Juliet, Rodrigue and Chimène. But what interests me is the description of Rebendart. He is first seen at the inauguration of a monument. 'I had often heard him repeat in his discourses that he personified France. I read in many journals that he was the symbol of the French and doubts assailed me with regard to my country. My country was, then, that nation which echoed only to the voice of lawyers? The advocates of my country were, then, men with their faces turned always toward the past? Every Sunday he inaugurated his weekly monument, pretending to believe that the dead soldiers were deliberating upon the sums due by Germany, and exercising pressure upon a silent jury. . . .

'The War? One has not every day such an excuse for justifying one's political character. But I forget that even in peace, even in his earlier discourses, the tone was already bitter, and when he opened exhibitions one perceived already in his harangues a hint of his demands on Europe, as if Europe owed us reparations because we had produced Pasteur, the Pont Alexandre, or Joan of Arc. . . . The family of Rebendart

had furnished to France for two centuries a respectable number of high functionaries, of Prime Ministers and of *bâtonniers* (Presidents of the Bar Association) while my family had been interested in those magical combinations in which metals or opinions unite. The Rebendarts, all advocates, had chosen for atmosphere the Law Courts of France.'

It is not surprising that these pictures of two families should have provoked immense controversy. They are not, of course, exact if they are indeed pictures of the Berthelot and the Poincaré families. To the Poincaré family belongs Henri Poincaré, who was not an advocate but the greatest mathematician of his time; and Lucien Poincaré, a great Recteur of the University. The conflict between the two families has no relation to reality. The climax is pure fiction, but after these descriptions it will probably be taken by many people as bearing some resemblance to an incident which a few years ago nearly wrecked the career of Philippe Berthelot.

It is not my purpose to take sides in this politico-literary controversy, but two observations may properly be made on the book. The first is that, contrary to the popular belief, there are in the French Republic families which have hereditary importance. The second is that there

is in France a reaction against the Rebendarts, lawyers, professors, men of legal and academic intelligence, whatever name they may bear in real life; for the men of legal and academic intelligence, who have created the Third Republic, have also nearly ruined the Third Republic as they ruined the First.

THE VENDOR OF LABELS

VANITY may take many forms, and most of them are innocent enough. One may be permitted to laugh without ill-nature over the little foibles of one's fellows. The traveller is particularly prone to exaggeration. Sometimes he lingers longer in the French capital than he intended, but how can he return home with the confession that he has not accomplished the vast tour which he had planned—or of which he would like to boast?

His weakness has been discovered. It has been turned to commercial purposes. There are many curious *métiers*, but perhaps there is no more curious *métier* than that which is exercised by the man who takes his stand near the Opéra. He is lying in wait for the voyager who is anxious to magnify his voyages.

He lies in wait, a wily tempter, and he has an exceptional sense of psychology. He judges his possible clients by their physiognomy. His instinct is almost unerring. Rarely does he make any mistake.

He takes up his position near an establishment

which occupies itself with the forwarding of baggage. There is nothing which specially distinguishes him. He is an ordinary looking person in ordinary clothes.

Under his arms he carries a bulging portfolio. He might be an advocate's clerk or an insurance agent. In fact, he is neither. His profession is much more unusual. He is a vendor of hotel labels. . . .

The endless panorama of the Paris streets unrolls itself before his eyes. He surveys the spectacle with apparent nonchalance and he shows no special interest. . . .

But suddenly he observes a traveller with whom he believes he can do business. A few words are exchanged. At first the visitor is inclined to brush him aside. Presently he becomes interested. Nearly always does he enter with the vendor of labels into the establishment which occupies itself with the forwarding of luggage.

Observe the vendor, if you are curious, open his portfolio, make a selection of his labels, and hand them over in return for francs or dollars or pounds or pesetas. Fine coloured labels they are. Upon them are written the names of the principal hotels of the great tourist centres of the world. . . . The voyager chooses for himself.

Here is a rich assortment. The names of the famous palaces of Nice, of Cannes, of Venice, of

Geneva, of London, of Florence, of Cairo, are printed in staring letters.

It is smart to have stayed in these places. Evidence of such luxurious travelling commands its price. The labels are stuck upon the portmanteaux and the valises. These portmanteaux and valises can be regarded with pride and pleasure when the traveller returns to his native land. He will carry with him a reminiscence of Rome, a hint of the Norwegian fjords, a suggestion of Corsica, the aroma of the Riviera, the colour of Greece. . . .

Should one be vexed at such vanity or should one smile amiably? At any rate, the man of the Opéra has discovered, as have many other merchants on a larger scale, that a living is to be obtained by pandering to the vanity of voyagers.

Where he obtains his labels is doubtless a trade secret. It is a mystery that we need not investigate. There is little chance that the great hotels which thus obtain additional publicity will complain.

The vendor of labels speaks six languages, which sufficiently proves that the vanity of the voyager is not peculiar to any particular country.

VICTOR HUGO

MUCH of the greatest work of Victor Hugo, France's foremost man of letters in the nineteenth century, poet, novelist, politician, dramatist, thinker, and in some sense apostle, was written in exile at Hauteville House, in the Island of Guernsey. Nothing could be more suitable than the acquisition by the city of Paris at this time—the hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the Romantic Movement headed by Hugo—of Hauteville House where were produced that amazing poem, or rather connected series of poems, *La Légende des Siècles*, and that wonderful prose masterpiece, *Les Misérables*.

It is the preface of the play 'Cromwell', outlining the aims of the new literary movement, which is taken as marking the inauguration of Romanticism. It was published in 1827. This preface rings like the notes of a trumpet. It is a trumpet at whose sound the walls of the Classical Jericho fell and there entered into the land of letters human emotions and human personages, forbidden by the rigid rules of Hugo's immediate

predecessors. It must be confessed that 'Cromwell' is, for various reasons of length and of style scarcely playable to-day, and the Comédie-Française chose instead 'Les Burgraves', a Hugoesque drama filled with symbolism, daring aspiration, ardent lyricism.

Literary movements must not of course be judged entirely by their labels. In France, at any rate, there are many so-called realists who are essentially romantic. Men like Balzac have been classified by various critics sometimes as belonging to the Romantic school and sometimes as belonging to the Realist school, and generally it is better to forget such designations and consider only the individual writer. The Romantic school proper was great because the men belonging to it were great—Victor Hugo and Alfred de Musset and Alfred de Vigny. Yet Victor Hugo undoubtedly expressed ideals which were anti-Classicist—or rather were opposed to the hard Classicism which had developed in the eighteenth and in the early years of the nineteenth century. Still, Romanticism may be described as not so much a school as the breaking-up of a school. It is better defended—if it needs defence—on negative, not on positive, grounds. It is more important for what it destroyed than for the formulas which it tried to set up.

That literature in France had grown hidebound

cannot be denied. There was too great an insistence on form. Tragic drama, for example, could only be couched in Alexandrine verse. Voltaire with all his genius wrote plays in the manner of the epoch which are almost unreadable because of their adherence to a certain formal structure. Personages were only worthy of attention if they occupied high situations, and the emotions of pride and honour, of love and hatred, were stilted into a stiff cycle.

Hugo impetuously smashed all the literary prohibitions. He aimed at beauty and at sublimity not in the manner of the neo-Classicists working with squares and compasses, but in his own free, unfettered way. His verses were varied. The ancient unities of time and place were disregarded. Hugo found inspiration in Shakespeare, who had been denounced as barbaric by the fastidious French. He admired Shakespeare as much as Voltaire had despised Shakespeare. Like the Swan of Avon he was blissfully unconscious of literary dogmas. He changed his scenes as he pleased and employed the time element as he chose. His characters were not necessarily kings and queens and dukes and duchesses. They might come from the most humble strata of society. He sympathized with the lowest and showed the good which exists in persons regarded as bad. He refused to clip his wings and flew

as high and far and deep as his strength would carry him.

There was of course weakness in Hugo, and often his sentimentalism rings false and his situations are melodramatic. That is why there was a reaction against Romanticism, and the so-called Naturists, eschewing sentiment and concerning themselves with more ordinary aspects of life, in an assumed spirit of objectivity, eventually emerged from the Romantic movement. The Naturists or Realists, too, fashioned theories, and they were less spontaneous. They corrected many faults but their work was never as great as the work they opposed, and they gradually led French literature into the noisome marshlands of offensive stagnation.

Perhaps schools in writing are wrong. They have been multiplied galore of recent years. The smaller men need the support of such crutches as doctrines and rules. They feel that there is safety in numbers. But in all literary discussion, whether one prefers Classic or Romantic or Realist tendencies, it should be remembered that superiority comes not from conscious theory but from innate talent.

Thus we may properly see the limitations and the defects of Classicism and of Romanticism and of Realism and at the same time admire the real qualities of a particular Classicist or Roman-

ticist or Realist. Victor Hugo may indeed be criticized for his extravagances, but he has such extraordinary virtues that it may truly be said he has preserved, as few men preserve, the esteem of posterity. In France, despite the clamour of Léon Daudet, Hugo remains one of the giants of the nineteenth century, and has lost nothing of the people's favour.

This was amply proved by the enthusiasm shown not in little *cénacles* but in popular assemblies at the celebration of the Centenary of Romanticism; and the gift of Hauteville House was accepted with delight. There had been some fear lest the house should pass into foreign hands. In it Victor Hugo spent twenty years of his life, and if ever a dwelling-place of genius should be cherished and guarded by the public authorities it is Hauteville House. The Council voted funds to repair the building and keep it as a museum, together with the building in the Place des Vosges of Paris, which Hugo occupied for several years. Hauteville is maintained with its furnishing precisely as Hugo left it when he returned to France from his long exile at the fall of the Second Empire. On the roof is still the glass room in which he used to meditate and work.

Hugo was a fiery democrat. He fought fiercely against Louis-Napoleon, whom he named

Napoleon the Little. When the Second Empire was established he was compelled to fly to Brussels. Thence he went to Jersey from which he was expelled because of his polemical writings. He settled in Guernsey, knowing that his exile would be protracted. Asked how he proposed to spend the time, he retorted, 'I shall behold the sea.'

At Hauteville House he again attacked Napoleon in *Napoléon le Petit* and in *Les Châtiments*. He partly produced *Les Contemplations* and *Travailleurs de la Mer*, besides other works already mentioned. From his island he ruled over French literature. He received invitations to preside at literary gatherings in every country of Europe. The King of Portugal officially announced to him, as though to another Power, the abolition of the capital penalty. After Sedan he returned to his country and was elected Senator.

It was perhaps 'Hernani', a romantic poetic drama, that violated all the classical rules that had held French literature in bondage, which marked the height of the battle between Romanticism and Classicism. A freer atmosphere, a wider play of emotion was won. Then he wrote *Notre-Dame de Paris*, with its flamboyant picture of the Middle Ages.

In the most prophetic passage of his writing he

declared: 'In the twentieth century there will be an extraordinary nation. It will be grand but it will be free. It will be illustrious, rich, thoughtful, pacific, cordial to the rest of humanity. It will have the sweet gravity of an elder sister. It will be astonished at the glory of conic projectiles and will distinguish with difficulty between a general and a butcher. A battle between Italians and Germans, between English and Russians, between Prussians and French, will appear to it as would appear to us a battle between Picards and Burgundians. It will regard the field of Sadowa as we regard the bull-rings of Seville. It will consider stupid that oscillation of victory which means that Austerlitz is always balanced by Waterloo. That nation will be Europe, and later still will be Humanity.'

Hugo predicted that social reform would abolish poverty, ignorance, prisons. He saw mankind happy, profiting by the discoveries and inventions of the savants. He saw an efflorescence of art. He saw complete liberty for mankind. It is a majestic vision which is one of the greatest glories, if not of Romanticism, then of Victor Hugo.

THE GOSPEL OF WORK

THE strength and the weakness of the French in business were perhaps hardly ever better summed up than in the late Mme. Ernest Cognacq, who with her husband founded and conducted the huge emporium by the Pont-Neuf called 'La Samaritaine'. All the meannesses and the restricted outlook of the honest bourgeoisie were in her, allied to the industry, the courage, the simplicity, of the same honest bourgeoisie. When she possessed countless millions of francs—she is known to have spent a hundred million on special charities—she was exactly what she was when she began to serve in a little shop, 'La Nouvelle Héloïse', in 1855.

Mme. Cognacq, until she was over eighty years of age, went as punctually and as regularly to her post by the plebeian omnibus as any of her employees. She practised the virtues which had been impressed upon her in her youth. She never surmounted them. Apparently she imagined that the continued prosperity of the Samaritaine depended upon her presence on the precise

stroke of nine o'clock. This does not mean that she considered herself a great organizer. She had promoted herself only slightly since those days when she was a *vendeuse* (a seller)—she had risen only as high as the rank of *chef de rayon* (overseer of a section).

There was this stupendous establishment, extending on all sides of her and above her, and she was nominally (with her husband) the proprietor; but in reality she was its slave. Every shop-assistant in her pay was freer than she was. She could only occupy her time in the manner to which she had been accustomed by long training and the pious observance of copy-book precepts. She would have been no more and no less had she remained a vendor in 'Au Petit Bénédice', which she and her husband, with nearly twenty years' economies, set up in 1872. 'Au Petit Bénédice' developed into 'La Samaritaine', to which all working Paris goes.

Probably nobody was more surprised than Mme. Cognacq at the extraordinary success of the shop, but she remained in her own department, doing her individual duty, never late, never absenting herself for a day or an hour, setting an admirable example to the seven or eight thousand workers. One might be bitterly ironic, but in truth she was an excellent woman. After all, is not the world built on these humble

qualities? Rare indeed is the larger vision, and usually the larger vision leads to disaster.

Besides, one feels a certain pity for one who started with lowly ambitions, and who, when those ambitions were surpassed a thousand times, still clung to them. She remained the good shop-assistant, perhaps the ideal shop-assistant, polite, obliging, scrupulous, picking up pieces of string from the floor. Yet never would she take holidays, and it is doubtful whether she had ever been outside Paris. On Sundays, when other employees went to the park, she went to work.

France, as I have noted elsewhere, is in process of transformation. The narrow bourgeois spirit in commerce is being abandoned. There is a more daring outlook, a wider sweep, a better conception of economic possibilities. It is to be questioned whether in our day the methods of Mme. Cognacq would carry anybody far. It may be that she is the last great representative of a vanishing age when thrift and perseverance were regarded as everything. One sees her story so well: as a young shop-assistant she met her future husband in the 'fifties; they were 'serious' people; they saved sou by sou; and in the 'seventies they decided that they had together painfully amassed a sufficient capital to get married and to open a little shop, 'Au Petit Bénéfice'. The name is, as the French say, a programme in

itself. Small profits—that was all they set out to make. Little by little they counted upon improving their position.

But circumstances were too much for them. In the changing Paris of the epoch it was necessary to add not only counter to counter, but department to department and premises to premises. The little shop became a vast emporium, almost against their will; but there is a sense in which they never got out of their little shop. If they imposed a discipline upon those who worked under them, they imposed a still more rigid discipline on themselves. At heart they were modest and good. They did not seek society. They have never figured in the fashionable life of Paris.

What could they do with the money which, in the shape of a myriad 'small profits', poured in upon them? They acquired no extravagant tastes. Until seven in the evening they were imprisoned in their shop. They could only distribute their wealth in charity—and to their credit let it be said that their charity was not on a small scale but on a scale commensurate with the emporium itself. Here at least they showed a lavish hand. They had no children, but they established a model Maternity Home. They set aside funds which the Académie Française was to allocate to deserving families with numer-

ous children. They did what good they could: they were genuine philanthropists, according to their lights; and yet somehow one wishes that their charity had begun at home.

But their Gospel was Work. Now Mme. Cognacq—peace be with her!—has passed on: she has taken her first holiday—an eternal holiday. Yet on the day of the funeral, at her express wish, 'La Samaritaine' remained open and employees who respected her memory stood by their counters.

LOVE IN NORTHERN LATITUDES

NORWAY is annoyed. Diplomatic incidents are to be feared. War may be declared on the Académie Goncourt. A book by Maurice Bedel constitutes the *casus belli*. It is entitled *Jérôme 60° Latitude Nord*. Here is an account of Love in Northern Latitudes which undoes the work of the League of Nations. Over a thousand years ago the Northmen swept down on France and founded the fine province whose history is intertwined with the history of England. Let us hope that there will not be in our day a great raid of Vikings.

What I have just written is nonsense, but it happens to be the current nonsense of Paris. There has been a tempest such as, I imagine, sometimes precipitates snow-covered pines into ice-covered fjords in the Scandinavian countries. M. Bedel is blamed, but the Académie Goncourt is more severely blamed. It should have known better than to have crowned a work which, in the opinion of self-constituted judges—who in certain instances have not even read, according to their own confession, the novel in question—is a libel on the women of Norway. One had supposed these women to be cold and passionless, and indeed there is nothing in M. Bedel's book which

really destroys that impression. Yet their freedom shocked the young Frenchman, Jérôme, who is the hero of M. Bedel, and therefore, one presumes, shocked M. Bedel himself. It is a comic situation. Paris has the reputation of frivolity, and if we are to believe certain French authors Frenchwomen have become lighter and looser since the war. For my part I do not believe it; but it is nevertheless paradoxical that the French should be horrified at the morals of Norway—or at least should be horrified at M. Bedel's expression of horror.

Jérôme 60° Latitude Nord is not a particularly good novel. Nor is it particularly bad. The choice of the Académie Goncourt, which has become far and away the most important dispenser of fictional fame—or rather of fame in fiction—is passable. It might have been better, but it certainly could have been worse. The novel is diverting enough. Jérôme is a young dramatist who visits Norway with preconceived ideas of its whiteness and purity and poetry. He expects the Northern women to be calm, reserved, icy—without human weaknesses but with a sort of frigid romance surrounding them. When he takes the ship from English shores he does indeed find on board a blonde, ethereal Norwegian girl who seems to correspond to his ideal. They gaze together on the moonlit sea and he is entranced.

So far his dreams have been fulfilled—though, as Uni explains afterwards, she was not herself on the ship: she was suffering from sea-sickness. By a curious coincidence, common in novels, the lady on whom he is first to call in Norway happens to be the mother of the blonde Uni. The mother has translated his play to be produced in the Norwegian capital. Therefore he has many opportunities of meeting Uni. Unhappily she is not what he had supposed. She is not even interested in his play. She is interested only in sport. The poor Frenchman, who has rarely taken physical exercise, is compelled to don skis and to perform impossible feats. He is even obliged to explain to her the French game of boxing, of which he knows nothing. At the beginning the novelty of it all pleases him and he imagines himself to be in love with this practical, athletic young person.

There are other women in the book. There is notably a much-married woman with whom he exchanges philosophic thoughts. They appear to agree perfectly. Thereupon she informs him that she has seen her husband and has arranged a divorce in order to marry Jérôme. Already congratulations pour in upon him and he has great difficulty in escaping from the toils of the impulsive Norwegian.

There is a third lively young creature who is

the Directrice of the Medico-Legal Institute. One would have thought that her position would have dictated a certain sobriety. But, on the contrary, she loves nothing so much as to talk of the cafés of Montparnasse and the gaiety of Paris, where she had studied. She has become Frenchified and demands a flirtation in the French fashion.

These experiences are disconcerting. Still Jérôme does not shake off the glamour of the North, and eventually he asks the mother of the blonde charmer for the hand of Uni. That is in accordance with correct French manners, but not in accordance with Norwegian ideas. The mother immediately informs him that she has nothing to do with her daughter's affairs, that Uni must be consulted directly. Uni readily consents, as she has consented to such propositions from others on earlier occasions. Then the dramatist is called to Denmark. 'You will of course take your fiancée with you,' says the mother. Anything more contrary to French views of the respectful and distant relations of people engaged to be married it would be hard to conceive. Worse follows. Uni has no reticences. There is now nothing to conceal since they are engaged. She insists on being taken to cabarets at Copenhagen, on drinking champagne, on asking Jérôme to pass her eau-de-

Cologne to her in her bath, on entering his bedroom in her *peignoir*. It is too much for the prudish Jérôme. How hard it is for us to understand the Puritanism of each other!

The French are in many ways far more Puritanic than, say, the English; and are hurt by the liberties allowed by the American code. Yet nobody will ever persuade the English and the Americans that they are less reserved than the French, whom they look upon as libertines and coquettes all.

It is Uni who breaks off the engagement—without regret, without anger, declaring that they do not comprehend each other. The Directrice thereupon frankly expounds to Jérôme Norwegian manners. If two people like each other they go about with each other and then they marry, and when they cease to like each other they simply divorce. In any case, they consider it shameful to hide anything. One is only guilty of that which one conceals.

Nobody will, I trust, take this little story as a profound study of Norwegian social life. The characters are probably exceptional, belonging to a special *milieu*. The interest lies in the contrast of different ideas as to what is proper and permissible. The only moral is that manners in general, and the manners of love in particular, differ in different latitudes.

HISTORY IS BUNK

THE writing of history is the most fantastic of pursuits.

I have written history myself and I know something of how others have written history. Historians may adopt the dry-as-dust method and with their multiplication of facts conceal the truth as the trees hide the wood. Or they may endeavour to put flesh upon dry bones and produce a narrative which, however, entertaining, is no more trustworthy than a novel. It is impossible to recreate the past. History, Mr. Ford, of automobile fame, has declared in a memorable word, is bunk. No two eyewitnesses will agree on material facts; and what can they know of moral facts? One has only to compare the newspapers of various countries on matters of international importance to realize how hard it is to record the truth.

Such is the opinion of the members of the French Congress of Teachers, who for a number of years have been discussing whether history should be taught in the schools. At a recent meeting they came to the conclusion that although it is impossible to exclude the subject altogether from the curriculum, only the salient

facts, showing the progress of civilization, should be conveyed to the youthful mind.

Their objection is that history is always related in inexact fashion in the text-books. No compiler is impartial: he has always a point of view, even though it be only the conventional patriotic point of view. His country is always right and the other country is always wrong. The child is led to despise nations which are not his own. Hence wars are rendered likelier. What text-book would tell the truth in France, for example, about the origins of the Franco-Prussian war, or even about the first Napoleon?

It was urged that historical studies should be postponed until an age when the student is old enough to judge for himself. The case for the suppression of history in the schools was admirably put by teachers who, at any rate, demonstrated that liberal feelings are still alive in France, especially among those who have charge of youth. It was pointed out that all the French scholastic books are saturated by the clerical spirit. They do not promote independence in regard to dogmas. They do inculcate a hatred of the foreigner. Everything is distorted in favour of the national hero and the national policy. The black deeds of France are whitewashed and the white deeds of France's neighbours are painted black. What applies to France applies, of course, to England,

to Germany, to America—where, according to Mr. 'Bill' Thompson, Mayor of Chicago, the text-books give an embittered account of the relations of the United States with England.

History, in short, is not a mass of innocuous errors, but a tissue of deliberate and dangerous lies fashioned in accordance with national sentiments. The French educators assert that it is their purpose to destroy inimical feelings and to kill war. But while the various peoples believe in the history of the schools they will be pre-disposed toward war. On these grounds the curriculum of the primary schools should be relieved of history altogether.

Against this too absolute condemnation of school history voices were raised in an endeavour to show that, properly conceived, history might help the child to a better understanding of the relations of peoples. Some time before the war, I recollect, M. Gustave Hervé, who was then a Socialist, wrote an admirable history intended for the schools. It was not admitted into the schools, but it was purchased in large numbers by the teachers and had considerable influence. Its only fault was that M. Hervé was far too savage and too individual in his outlook to write a primer. But his little work was an excellent corrective to those histories which glorified wars and depicted the Kings of France in glowing

colours. Since the war M. Jacques Bainville has written a book which purports to be the history of France, but which flies to the opposite extreme and is a perfect example of the French spirit of insularity—the spirit which believes that France is a heaven-made country surrounded on all sides by barbarians.

If history is partial and tendencious, and serves to keep the flame of patriotic hatred burning, it should not, argued the teachers of history, be left in the hands of the reactionaries. All that can be said against it as it is now taught emphasizes the need of a proper antidote. Since the French teachers wish to propagate the truth they should not show history as a mere succession of wars leading to further inevitable wars—a constant clash of country against country—but as the steady progress of wider conceptions, of increasing civilization, of growing internationalism. They should teach history not to fortify patriotism but to help in the realization of universal fraternity.

Such were the contrasting theses. The conclusions to which the Congress came were as follows: 1. The teaching of history is necessary and should remain inscribed on the programme of the primary schools. 2. Such teaching should respect the truth and repudiate the falsifications which usually dishonour school history. 3. It should show the human evolution towards progress and

justice, should devote its attention to the economic and social life of the past, should indicate what each country owes to other peoples, should be resolutely pacific, rejecting everything calculated to inspire hatred of the foreigner.

It must not be supposed that this is idle talk. The Congress agreed that there should be drawn up, at the cost of the National Syndicate of Teachers, new text-books inspired by those ideas. Those which are to be used in the primary schools will contain a few outstanding facts marking the different stages of human history. They will be extremely simple, serving only for initiation. For older students there will be fuller text-books impregnated with sentiments of love for the human family, hatred of war, passion for justice.

It may be objected that these text-books too will be extremely partial, written from a standpoint which may or may not be defensible and with the purpose of supporting a thesis. But at least the thesis is more helpful than those which have hitherto dominated school histories. The mind of the child will be turned in the right direction. Is this sophistry? Perhaps. But I know that it is foolish for anyone to become indignant in his demand for the truth. Where is truth to be found? Not in histories. Historians are devoid of it.

ANATOLE FRANCE'S END

PEACEFUL lucidity marked the passing of Anatole France. His death was of a piece with his life and with his work. In the beautiful country retreat of La Béchellerie, part of which dates from the sixteenth century, the window of his room looked out on the road which leads to Chinon: a road which linked the laughing philosopher of the sixteenth century, Rabelais, with the ironist and dreamer who was the most universally honoured writer of our day.

Anatole France was always on the side of sweetness and light. His attitude was always critical, a critical attitude which detected unerringly the weak place, the botched construction, but which nevertheless, while revealing the errors, tenderly, gracefully enwrapped them in an artificial illumination of supreme goodness. He has been described as a pessimist, but he was a pessimist who helped towards a better appreciation of possibilities. Never was he the Nihilist. Through his irony one caught constant glimpses of beauty; showing us life as it is, though without bitterness, he indicated life as it should be. He

taught tolerance and calm in an age in which even the reformers add to the confusion by their reckless energy.

In France he was known as 'Monsieur Bergeret', and indeed his own philosophy is largely identical with that of the fictitious character he created. Throughout all his books one finds the portrait of himself. There was in him something of the Abbé Jérôme Coignard, whose opinions he shared. In Sylvestre Bonnard one finds the virtues of Anatole France. A number of his works are frankly autobiographical, and in the evening of his days he gave us volumes of his exquisite prose in which he looked back pleasantly on his earlier years and, in the setting sun, remembered the dawn.

He was not a fighting man, as other French writers have been, but he never hesitated publicly to express his view of events. He was always in revolt against vulgarity, and on unpopular platforms he denounced chauvinism and mercantilism. He stood without flinching for justice. Some of his admirers were shocked because he wrote letters to the Communist organs, but his sympathies were always with the minority, always with those who were oppressed. He was careless of his reputation, but his reputation never suffered, for it was realized that in his political activities he was moved by the finest sympathy.

He could not be counted among the Socialists or the Communists in any doctrinal sense. He had merely the cultured man's dream of a better organization of society, in which everybody should have leisure to cultivate the arts and surround himself with graceful and delightful things.

In private life Anatole France was always generous and charming. He received visitors at the Villa Saïd, his house in Paris, visitors who often had little claim upon him, and he would show his artistic treasures—his Prud'hons in particular—to all who were interested.

Those of us who met him found him to be precisely as one would have imagined him from his books. I have myself described him: calm, composed, a trace of *tristesse* in the general expression, irony lurking about the lips, placid amusement peeping from the eyes, an indescribable air of goodness and gentleness about him. He seemed tall, with long, wrinkled, brownish face, a strong nose, carefully trimmed beard, and on his head a round red skull-cap. He was nonchalant in his manner, he could hardly be roused to passion; and he found a meditative amusement in all that happened about him. He spoke wisely and wittily, but somewhat haltingly.

His methods of work have been described, with considerable exaggeration, by M. Brousseau, who

was his secretary for many years and has written two malicious books about him. France made free use, it is said, of scissors and paste, but he glorified all that he touched. If he discovered his anecdotes in ancient tomes he made them supremely his own; if he copied passages from guide-books, histories, biographical dictionaries, he worked over them again and again. One curious example is given by way of illustration. From a biographical dictionary, we are told, he copied this sentence: 'The wife of Théroulde was rich and of good reputation.' That is surely flat enough, but Anatole France recopied it as follows: 'As the wife of Théroulde was rich, she was said to be of good reputation.'

He wrote slowly and somewhat painfully. Often he was not satisfied until he had worked over seven successive proofs. It was by labour that he achieved his effects of ease; it was by patience that he arrived at perfection. Nobody who has any knowledge of French literature will deny that the prose style of Anatole France, despised by the supercilious young men of to-day, was as near perfection as may well be.

It is difficult to say which of the books of Anatole France is best known; they nearly all run into hundreds of thousands of copies in the French edition, and have been translated into every tongue. In England and America he was

undoubtedly the most celebrated of French writers. Who does not know the wonderful story of 'Crainquebille', the poor street seller persecuted by the forces of so-called law and order? Who has not read of the 'crime' of Sylvestre Bonnard, in an early work which was crowned by the Académie Française? *Le Lys Rouge* and *Thaïs* are in somewhat different vein from the greater part of Anatole France's books. Apart from the 'Bergeret' series, and the *Rotisserie de la Deine Pédauque*, it is possible that one should choose as the most characteristic example of the genius of Anatole France *L'Ile des Pingouins*, a terrible ironic history of France—especially of modern France—and indeed of civilization.

But one should not forget *La Révolte des Anges*, nor *Les Dieux ont Soif*, and then there is the Life of Jeanne d'Arc on which Bernard Shaw makes some observations in the preface of *Saint Joan*. And how can one omit the delicious Souvenirs of his earlier years contained, above all, in *Petit Pierre* and *La Vie en Fleur*?

For my part, too, I take particular pleasure in the large body of his work which may be described as literary criticism. France was one of the most accurate of critics, not proceeding by rule of thumb but applying an alert mind to every subject which he touched.

He was essentially a lover of old Paris, loitering in the sunny Tuileries, lingering in the shadow of Saint-Sulpice and of Notre Dame, wandering among the bookshops which line the *quais* of the Seine. The son of a librarian, he was cradled in a library and made of a library his place of refuge. Nevertheless, from the library windows he looked out on large horizons. The lover of Paris was at home in all times and climes. If he was conscious of folly and futility, he was never bitter but always smilingly tolerant. He would not mistake romance for reality, but he cast the soft glow of the imagination, he cast his wistful kindly spirit over all that he saw with his clear eyes.

The greatest French writer of our age has disappeared, but he has left us an inspiration and a promise. The supercilious young men will return to him as to a Master.

FRANCE AND THE FRENCH

JULIUS CAESAR discovered that the Gauls were garrulous, and the French of to-day preserve the love of their ancestors for fine words. National characteristics are realities, and there is unity, both historical and ethnographical, in spite of the geographical diversity, the racial admixture, and the liveliest political vicissitudes of two thousand years. It is dangerous to generalize about a people, but with due reservations one may say that the virtues as well as the vices of the French are all in some way to be traced to their remarkable verbalism. D'Artagnan is typically French, and this dashing, brilliant figure owes much of his picturesqueness to his Gascon tongue. Tartarin is apparently in strange contradiction, prudent, essentially bourgeois, but he becomes amusing and even lovable because of his vivacious language. Words lead the French to imaginative heights, and words equally lead the French to logical levels. They are at once romantic and realist. Their eloquence takes every form—poetry and irony, idealism and scepticism, profundity and pre-

cision, colour and clarity. The Frenchman is both fantastic and practical. Like Cyrano he sports the largest-sized *panache*. Like Joseph Prud'homme he keeps his feet on solid ground. Certainly the French are the most intellectual people in the world, but, dazzled by ideas, hypnotized by the magic of abstract phrases, they frequently fall into folly. Their arts, their magnificent exploits, their courage, their ingenuity, their daily wisdom in the adventure of living, are all derived from their sensitiveness to vivid expression.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the part that the Romans played in the making of France during the five hundred years that they remained in the country. I refuse to fall into the error of modern historians who, having discovered the Gauls, deny the Romans. Yet as Camille Jullian, a great historian, has pointed out, there was indeed a civilization in ancient Gaul long before the coming of the Romans. Industry, agriculture, commerce, were practised freely throughout the whole territory of an empire which, three hundred years before Christ, was the most powerful in the world. The Gauls had, however, like the French of to-day, an immense fault—they were disunited. It was because they quarrelled with each other that Vercingétorix was defeated. The Roman colonization, when completed, became a

unifying influence. The Roman stamp was indelible, and is to be seen in the French laws, in the French roads, in the French language, in the French traditions. But the Gaul is indestructible. Since the downfall of Rome, France has been overrun many times, notably by the Franks, who for several centuries gave France its rulers; and by the Vikings, who settled in Normandy; and by the English, who were eventually driven out by Joan of Arc. But nothing has changed the fundamental Frenchman. Like the United States of America, a huge melting-pot of many races, France has peculiar powers of absorption; and Arabian and Spanish and Germanic invaders have been assimilated.

Nourishment has been derived from every institution. To the making of Modern France, feudal baron, and king, and priest has each brought his contribution. The Republican who is against privileged lords and resplendent monarchs and powerful prelates of the Church, readily admits that in their day they were necessary. After the reign of the great Charlemagne, at the end of the eighth and in the ninth century, feudalism flourished. It was not the Revolution, as is sometimes supposed, which destroyed feudalism. The kings, from the coming of Hugues Capet in 987, systematically endeavoured to weaken the great vassals whose independence was incompatible with

monarchy. But it was the Crusades, from the eleventh century to the thirteenth, which really undid the barons and enabled the kings to take more and more the control of the country into their own hands. This progress towards unity was checked by the disastrous Hundred Years' War, in which French and British fought, and in which the French fought among themselves. France was within an ace of complete subjugation when Joan of Arc performed her miracles of prowess and caused Charless VII to be crowned in the early part of the fifteenth century. The Capetian policy was resumed, and the cunning Louis XI defeated the coalition of nobles and made France one nation.

In the long record of French wars we perpetually find France constituting herself an armed missionary in this or that cause. Often mistakenly, yet always sincerely, she believed she was spreading civilization and was animated by an ideal. That is an important part of her mental make-up. Always from her expeditions she brought back something of value to her own life. From the East she brought back, during the Crusades, many arts and crafts. In Italy, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, she was beaten, but she brought back the Renaissance.

French architecture is of four principal orders—the early low, dark Romanesque style, the soar-

ing style falsely called Gothic, which covered the country (to use Michelet's phrase) with the white mantel of cathedrals, the Renaissance style inspired by Italy but given a French form in the multitudinous châteaux which, from the days of François I, were erected, and the Classical style of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of which Versailles is the crowning glory.

Provinces were lost and won in the long struggles with the Austrians and the Spaniards, and civil war succeeded civil war when in the sixteenth century Protestants were pitted against Catholics. It was Henri IV who stopped the rot, and by the Edict of Nantes, which gave a legal status to the Protestants, allayed the passions that had been provoked by the terrible murders of Saint Bartholomew's Day twenty-six years earlier. There followed the triumph of absolute monarchy in the period from 1624 to the Revolution which is properly known as the *ancien régime*. That seventeenth century, which opened with Richelieu directing the policy of Louis XIII and ended in the declining days of Louis XIV, whose reign was the longest in European history, made France supreme. Everywhere her armies were successful, and the glittering Court of the Roi Soleil at Versailles attained a brilliance that has never been surpassed. But there were abuses of power. On one side were privileged classes and on the other

an oppressed people. Matters became worse under the reign of the dissolute Louis XV and the feeble Louis XVI.

Financial difficulties made the Revolution inevitable, but it was certainly helped by the intellectual movement of the eighteenth century. Montesquieu, Rousseau, Diderot, Voltaire, and the rest of the *philosophes* scattered the dynamite of ideas. They did not foresee how they would explode. That was not their business. Their business was to apply their minds to the human problems and to assert once more France's predominance in the realm of the intellect.

The greatest event of modern times was undoubtedly the French Revolution. Liberty, Equality, and the Fraternity were the magic words which appealed, as magic words always do, to the French people. The reality did not correspond to the ideal; but with all its excesses and its massacres and its wars, the Revolution did emancipate the French people and create the France of our day. Napoleon, though establishing a dictatorship which was utterly opposed to the original conceptions of the Revolutionaries, carried on their work, and organized the country. The administrative machine which he constructed largely remains, though there have been, since the First Empire, a Restoration, an Abdication after severe street fighting, another Revolution, a

Second Republic, a Second Empire, and a Third Republic, built on the ruins of the defeated France of 1871. That nineteenth century has been close packed with history, but change after change has only confirmed the general conformation and political government of France.

Certainly France is restless, and it may be that the oscillations which began with the taking of the Bastille in 1789 have not yet ceased. In spite of the victory of 1918 France is faced with greater problems than ever. The French are becoming aware of the vice of verbalism. Although verbalism has its virtues it has also its vices. For my part I do not think France will lose her love of oratorical phrases, but nevertheless there is a real distrust of Parliament and of the parliamentary system. In the French Chamber one is constantly reminded of the verdict of Julius Caesar. With its incessant strife, its swiftly changing majorities, its inveterate speech-making, Parliament is incapable of dealing with the tremendous issues that have presented themselves since the war. We have heard calls for a dictatorship. There is a decline of faith in the politicians.

The financial crisis in 1926 brought this dislike to a head and angry crowds collected before the Chamber of Deputies. The truth is, of course, that the financial machinery of France was outmoded even before the war. With all their readi-

ness to explode on occasion, the French are a patient people, and with all their interest in novelty they are intensely conservative at bottom. They have clung to an obsolete system which has not been modified as the economic conditions have been modified during the past hundred years. The taxation of an arbitrary and onerous character which was levied on the people under the *ancien régime* has made them permanently in rebellion against the tax-collector. That spirit is gradually being altered; but there has also developed in France an excessively large army of officials far from efficient. The French like to sink into safe jobs, always ill-paid but generally comfortable. The number of these jobs is amazing and they tend to sterilize French efforts. Everywhere there is misemployment. The functionary is the curse of France, but no responsible minister is bold enough to apply the guillotine.

As a result of the French contentment with a modest and regular existence, there is a steady fall in the birth-rate. Thus France is obliged to import workers from other countries, such as Poland, Italy, Spain, and Czecho-Slovakia to fulfil the necessary work of the community. Happily for the thrifty French who become *rentiers* and bureaucrats, the Poles, the Italians, and the Spanish, who settle in France, soon become more French than the French. Yet it remains true that

France, which is now, with the exception of Russia, the largest country in Europe, is under-populated and is surrounded by countries, such as Germany and Italy, which are over-populated and whose population is continually increasing. Even with the addition of Alsace-Lorraine there has been a diminution of the French population in the past twenty years. It is obvious that diplomatic difficulties are always liable to arise, since France is intent on keeping her place in the foremost rank of the Great Powers. At present the relations of France with her neighbours are better than most people would have supposed possible ten years ago. Still, France is a prey to suspicion and keeps on foot the largest army in Europe. Every young man must serve in the army. The period of his service is, we are told, to be reduced to twelve months. But even twelve months' compulsory military service at a critical age deprives the country of a good deal of its potential economic force.

I will conclude on a hopeful note. Many close observers, among whom I may perhaps range myself, think they detect a change in the methods of French industrialists. It may be that that is the greatest result of the war. No longer are French business men playing for safety. No longer do they content themselves with carrying on a comfortable family concern. They have

accepted the universal system of interlocked enterprises. Their horizon is wider. They are prepared for fierce competition, but they also solicit international co-operation. They do not shrink from responsibilities. There are nations which were industrialist in the full sense of the word nearly a century ago and which appear to be in a groove. But France has only recently become conscious of the industrial possibilities and may accommodate herself to the new conditions of production and of distribution.

Nor is it only the industrialists who are less narrow and insular. The most characteristic French writers, at least among the younger men, are showing remarkable activity, and go far afield for their effects. They are no longer willing to stay at home. They want to see the world. In French literature to-day you will find the most vivid notations on Spanish themes, on English life, on African mysteries, on Eastern glamour, on Russian fermentation, on American bustle. This is a new phenomenon—France does not wrap herself in the mantle of her frontiers, but eagerly, as never before, goes out to see the wider world.

